

Sight AND Sound

International Film Quarterly/Spring 1971

30p \$1.25



hunter films

The Unique 16mm. Film Library

Romantic?	.	.	IMMORTAL STORY
Nostalgic?	.	.	LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN
Adventurous?	.	.	REBELLION
Humorous?	.	.	THE MANDRAKE
Religious?	.	.	THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW
Humanitarian?	.	.	WARRENDALE
Pessimistic?	.	.	DUTCHMAN
Optimistic?	.	.	HUGO AND JOSEFIN
Way Out?	.	.	THE TRIP

Our new catalogue will be out shortly (35p)

hunter films limited
182 wardour street
london W1V 4BH
tel: 01-734 8527/8 3978/9

BLACK MAN'S MUSIC IN A WHITE MAN'S LAND



Horace Ove's

REGGAE

G.B. 1970 colour 60 minutes

Reggae, the music of the West Indian Community in Britain, is a close cousin to the American Blues. Both come from the most oppressed segment of society—from the gutter. It's revolutionary music. The only whites that really understand it are the skin-heads. It has broken down the barrier between the black and white working classes. It's music with a message.

Harley Cokliss'

CHICAGO BLUES

U.S.A. 1970 colour 50 minutes

When the black man arrived in Chicago from the South, he brought the Blues with him. But the harshness of life in the concrete jungle affected his music, changing it from a soft rural music to a harsh city sound.

Both films available on 16mm only.

New 1971/72 Catalogue Supplement now available.

CONTEMPORARY FILMS LTD., 55 Greek Street, London W1V 6DB (01-734 4901)

National Film Theatre
South Bank Waterloo
London

NFT



The Clowns directed by Federico Fellini

Become a member of the
British Film Institute
and see these programmes
during the April-May period
at NFT 1 & NFT 2.

Further information about
membership from the
Membership Office,
72 Dean Street,
London W1V 5HB.
Telephone 01-437 4355
or call at the NFT between
11.30 a.m. and 8.30 p.m.

1 Italian TV Film Festival

New feature films from RAI-TV, the Italian state television company, including British premieres of Fellini's *The Clowns*, Rossellini's *Socrates* and *The Acts of the Apostles* and Liliana Cavani's *Francis of Assisi* plus films by Bertolucci, Olmi, Nelo Risi, Vancini, Blasetti, Apra and Rossi.

2 The Ultimate Professional— Michael Curtiz

Twenty-six films directed by one of Hollywood's most skilled and underestimated directors, Michael Curtiz, ranging from his Austrian spectacle *Moon of Israel* through such rarities as *Noah's Ark* and *Mammy* to classics like *Casablanca* and *Mildred Pierce*.

3 The Marx Brothers

A complete retrospective of the films of the leading anarchists of the cinema.

4 Development of the New Cinema

Friday night programmes devoted to forerunners and masters of the independent 'underground' cinema including works by Richter, LeGrice, Warhol, Brakhage, Kren, Zwartjes and Kubelka.

5 Tribute to Rex Harrison

A selection of some of the finest films by one of the finest of all British actors.

6 British Independent Movie Makers

Recent feature films made independently in Britain, including works by Peter Whitehead, Philippe Mora, John Llewellyn and Nicholas Gosling.

7 John Player Series

Lectures and personal appearances by leading film-makers.

THE LONDON FILM SCHOOL

QUALIFICATIONS

Scholarships or grants previously awarded by any educational authority, government or Foundation do not necessarily guarantee acceptance by the school. Students must be able to understand and communicate in English at an advanced level. Students must be prepared to work hard in an environment that is more a workshop than an academy. A basic knowledge of still photography is an essential—even for students who wish to become writers or directors.

Although there is no official minimum age, no candidate is enrolled immediately on completion of his secondary education. Candidates are invited to apply at this time for an interview, in order that their potentialities may be assessed. If considered suitable they will be given provisional acceptance for a later course.

Candidates who are already graduates of Universities or colleges may be accepted without this requirement.

For Overseas Residents

Applicants from abroad must be university graduates and will be asked to submit work. Experience in film-making will also be taken into account. All fees must be paid in advance.

For Residents of the United Kingdom

Minimum educational requirements are a university degree, five passes at 'O' Level and two at 'A' Level G.C.E., or diplomas from art or technical schools; experience of film-making may be accepted in some cases. Applicants will be asked to submit work and must in all cases attend for at least one interview at this school; they may also be interviewed by their local education authorities.

CURRICULUM

In addition to lectures, practical sessions, seminars, etc., all students must work on at least six films during the two years.

In the second term, each student is required to make a short individual exercise in 16 mm. colour—working in groups of four. All other exercises are group films made in units of from 5 to 9 students (depending on the nature of the term's exercise). At least two films must be in colour. At least two should be in 35 mm.

A THIRD YEAR COURSE in Animation is available to successful graduates of the two year Diploma Course. In certain cases, when a student wishes to make a career in the field and shows the required talent, animation may be taken in lieu of the second year of the Diploma Course. Graduates of certain other film schools may apply for the animation course.

DATES

COURSE 56		26th April, 1971
COURSE 57		27th September, 1971
COURSE 58		3rd January, 1972
COURSE 59		17th April, 1972
COURSE 60		25th September, 1972

Note: A complete self-contained course commences three times every year. Each term lasts twelve weeks. There are three terms in each year.

Our intensive two year courses concentrate on the arts and techniques of professional film-making but our position in central London makes it possible for students to keep up with the other arts at first hand. Narrow specialisation is discouraged: every student is expected to reach a reasonable standard in all departments—and to pass tests in the practical use of cameras, etc. During the second year each student should achieve fully professional results in any job allocated to him.

All films, both live action and animation, are based on the students' own original work. The choice of subjects—and of jobs—is largely democratic, especially in the first year—but films must be made within the required budget. Advice is given by experienced film-makers and production is supervised by professional course directors, recently including Les Blair, Charles Crichton, James Clark, Sidney Cole, Desmond Davis, Clive Donner, Guy Hamilton, Geoff Husson, John Krish, Wolf Rilla, Michael Truman and Mannie Wynn.

The London Film School is an educational charity registered with the Department of Education and Science. Board of Governors: Jack Black, LL.B., Clive Donner, Robert Dunbar (Chairman & Principal), John Halas, F.S.I.A., Peter Hennessy, F.R.P.S., Roger Manvell, B.A., Ph.D., D.Litt., Ian Wratten, C.B.E., Hon. F.R.P.S., Hon. F.B.K.S., Hon. F.I.B.P., F.R.S.A.

24 SHELTON STREET, LONDON, W.C.2 Telephone: 01-240 0168



Cinema Books: a statement

As a further development to their expanding list of Cinema Books, Secker & Warburg are pleased to announce that they have acquired the following titles from Thames & Hudson:

THE HAUNTED SCREEN
Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt
by Lotte H. Eisner
Illustrated £4.20

THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF "QUE VIVA MEXICO!"
by Sergei Eisenstein and Upton Sinclair
Edited by Harry M. Geduld and Ronald Gottesman
Illustrated £6.30

FOUR SCREENPLAYS
by Carl Theodor Dreyer
Illustrated £4.25

At the same time, Secker & Warburg have re-acquired the **Cinema 1** Series, which is

published in association with the British Film Institute. The titles available (Hardback = H, Paperback = P, all illustrated) are:

- 1 **JEAN-LUC GODARD**
by Richard Roud
H £1.50; P 90p
- 2 **LOSEY ON LOSEY**
by Tom Milne
P 75p
- 4 **HOW IT HAPPENED HERE**
by Kevin Brownlow
P 75p
- 8 **BILLY WILDER**
by Axel Madsen
P 75p
- 9 **SIGNS AND MEANING IN THE CINEMA**
by Peter Wollen
H £1.50; P 75p
- 10 **BUSTER KEATON**
by David Robinson
H £1.50; P 75p
- 11 **PASOLINI ON PASOLINI**
by Oswald Stack
H £1.50; P 75p
- 12 **HORIZONS WEST**
by Jim Kitses
H £1.50; P 75p

13 **ROUBEN MAMOULIAN**
by Tom Milne
H £1.50; P 75p

14 **HOLLYWOOD CAMERAMEN**
by Charles Higham
H £1.50; P 90p

Further titles for Summer and Autumn publication this year will be announced in the near future.

An exciting new development is the introduction of a new series, **Cinema 2**. The first titles (all illustrated, and available in Hardback and Paperback) will be published in the late Spring of this year: **GARBO AND THE NIGHT WATCHMEN**
Edited by Alistair Cooke
MAGIC AND MYTH OF THE MOVIES
by Parker Tyler
HOLLYWOOD VOICES
Edited by Andrew Sarris

Other new titles to be published in the first half of

1971 are:
THE FILM DIRECTOR AS SUPERSTAR
by Joseph Gelmis
Illustrated £2.75
UNDERGROUND FILM
by Parker Tyler
Illustrated £2.75
FILM CULTURE
Edited by P. Adams Sitney
Illustrated £3.50

Added to which are some of the Secker & Warburg titles which have become established sellers:
THE PARADE'S GONL BY
by Kevin Brownlow
Illustrated £6.50
HORROR MOVIES
by Carlos Clarens
Illustrated £3.15
FUN IN A CHINESE LAUNDRY
by Joseph von Sternberg
Illustrated £2.10
HITCHCOCK
by Francois Truffaut
Illustrated £5.25

Secker & Warburg

Sweden



Books

From time to time you will meet this emblem in this and other publications. It signifies the effort of the Swedish Institute and Dillon's in co-operation to present to the British public books on Sweden, on things Swedish and by Swedish authors. Books advertised under this emblem can—if they are not available at your local bookshop—be ordered from Dillon's University Bookshop, 1 Malet Street, London, W.C.1.

Sweden 1 and 2

by Peter Cowie

The most complete assessment in English of the cinema in Sweden. Volume 1 contains 170 filmographies plus credits and synopses for 70 major films, with an index to 1,200 titles listed in the text. Volume 2 is a critical study of the themes, trends and directors in Swedish cinema.

A. Zwemmer Limited

Each volume: £0.90 paper, £1.50 cloth

The New Swedish Cinema

by Nils Petter Sundgren

Previously only one or two names have stood out in their generation of Swedish film-makers. To-day, for the first time, the people necessary to achieve an all-round culture of this kind are available. The new Swedish film enters the 70's with a broad range of disparate and creative talents. Sundgren's book concentrates on the recent achievements.
Swedish Institute, Stockholm
£1.45

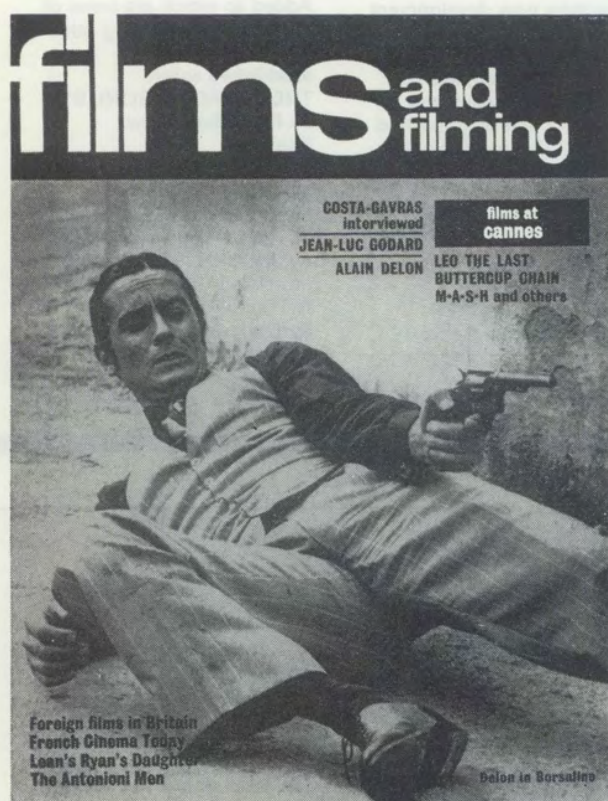
Order from

**DILLON'S
UNIVERSITY BOOKSHOP**

1 Malet Street, London, W.C.1

Complete list of **SWEDEN BOOKS** available from Dillon's

*please
write
for a
free*



*introductory
copy*

WRITE YOUR NAME & ADDRESS HERE, CUT & POST THIS COUPON
or write a separate letter

name

address

town

county

films
and filming

ARTILLERY MANSIONS, 75 VICTORIA STREET, LONDON, SW1.

Everyone's using

THE BIGGEST EVER

International FILM GUIDE 1971

Edited by PETER COWIE

"As informative a guide to the year's cinema as ever"

—Margaret Hinxman (*Sunday Telegraph*)

"Anyone who wants to keep up with the contemporary
film scene should make this book a must-read item"

—*Film Fan Monthly*

"One volume which seems to get better every year"

—*What's On in London*

480 pages 200 photos 75p (plus 10p post)

Published by THE TANTIVY PRESS

108 New Bond Street, London W1Y 0QX

Project in full 'SCOPE for only £26.50

now's your chance to see those
CinemaScope films as they were
originally shot by using —

16mm CENTAMORPHOT anamorphic ('squeeze')
lens—adjustable to any projection distance and giving
the full 2x expansion. Available from the end of
February at only £26.50. Suitable adaptors custom-
made to order from £3.67 to fit any projector.
Send 2½p stamp for full list.

WIDE SCREEN KIT to make up your own wide
screen. One size only available 30"×80" full 'scope
format (2.66:1) at £7.75 plus 50p carriage in U.K.
In 'Hi-Flect' screen paint, £1 per pint.

"ALL ABOUT WIDESCREEN" 34-page booklet by
Tony (Mr Widescreen) Shapps gives you all the 'gen'
for only 35p.

☐ Please send me "ALL ABOUT WIDESCREEN" for which I enclose
35p

☐ I would like to order the new CENTAMORPHOT for which I enclose
cheque for £26.50.

☐ Please send me your list, 2½p stamp enclosed.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

(Block letters)

The Widescreen Centre

BCM/SCOPE-68, LONDON WC1

Telex 28905

Cables: MONOMARK LONDON

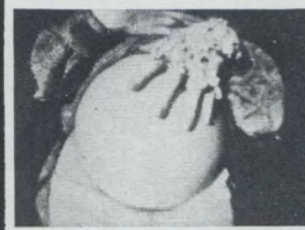
THE SECRET LIFE OF HERNANDO CORTEZ

a film by John Chamberlain

cast: Taylor Mead, Ultra Violet

Strange comic film juxtaposing the weird timeless and sometimes hilarious antics of superground star Taylor Mead with John Chamberlain's intoxicated vision of beautifully endowed Ultra Violet highlights of the film warmly reflect the rich exotic colours and light of Yucatan and its people here par excellence is the lunatic beautiful often pretentious fringe reminding us again that "chaos is the eternal ground of creation".

16 mm colour 69 mins. sound



TIMES FOR

a film by Stephen Dwoskin

cast: Carolee Schneemann, Maurice Colbourne, Verity Bargate, Carmel Court, Sally Gidal

Once upon anytime in a world like now, any man wandered into an island of women. Their succulent presence, like many Circes, drew his fantasy. He follows. He seeks a kingdom, but as I foretold you, we're all spirits, and are melted into air, into thin air: and, like the baseless fabric of this vision, the cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces, the solemn temples, the great globe itself, yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve, and, like this insubstantial pageant faded, leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep.

Gold Ducat Mannheim Festival 1970, San Francisco Festival 1970

16 mm colour 80 mins. sound



MARE'S TAIL

a film by David Larcher

A film like MARE'S TAIL is an epic film flight into an inner space. It is a 2½ hour visual accumulation, which, as it is the film-maker's personal odyssey, becomes the odyssey of each of us. . . . It flies, swims and moves from point to point—just like each of us. The lines move into shapes which move into orbits and your eyes water into colours. What each of us can see is more than what we do see. The film becomes one of the most vital penetrations into the experience of seeing. . . . Ranging from the abstract to the figurative form MARE'S TAIL allows no direct verbal way to give it its position. It not only goes from the abstract to the figurative, in terms of its objective view, but explores the subjective responses as well. It is a classic in film perception.

(from Steve Dwoskin's forthcoming book 'Film Is' to be published by Peter Owen Ltd.)

16mm colour 150 mins. sound

NECROPOLIS

a film by Franco Brocani

cast: Viva, Pierre Clementi, Tina Aumont, Paul Jabara, Louis Waldon

Necropolis is an absolutely storyless film. Instead of a rhythm which spirals downwards into the deep, there is here a fluctuating movement, like the tide with its slow and constant oscillation; Here you will not find a project in time but a risk in space. By means of abstract indications, signal-fragments, a real panorama is created. End-point is beginning point. The film becomes a trace, an uneasy series of foot-steps following which everyone, looking for the others, should find himself. Keeping in mind this ideology of fragments, Necropolis may be considered the place of excess. History, culture, cities are the result of an uninterrupted sublimation, the effect of "chystallized sins, of accumulating expiations". A kind of spiritual guerilla is therefore fought under the banner of utopia and love. The main characters are: Frankenstein, Attila, Montezuma, Hellogabalus, the Bloody Countessa Marthory and the Devil. Emblematic situations such as Magic, Religion, Bourgeois warfare, have been chosen at their most poignant charge. All is flattened, never "told". What remains is their graffiti.

35mm colour 90 mins. sound

These O Productions are available at:

USA: New York Film-maker's Cooperative
175 Lexington Avenue
New York, New York 10016
(212) 889-3820

UK: The Other Cinema
12/13 Little Newport Street
London WC2H 7JJ
(01) 734-8508/9

The Other Cinema is a non-profit organisation, recently formed to promote, exhibit and distribute independent films; to remove the obstacles which at present prevent film-makers from receiving a fair return and their films a fair exhibition; to reach audiences more directly by arranging special programmes of these committed and original films; to stimulate interest in the new cinema (e.g. through the programmes at our new cinema in central London) and to help support fresh attempts at local exhibition.

the other cinema

DISTRIBUTION LIST

Franco Brocani **NECROPOLIS** (Italy, 35mm, 110 mins, colour) with Viva and Pierre Clementi
 John Chamberlain **THE SECRET LIFE OF HERNANDO CORTES** (USA, 16mm, 69 mins, colour) with Taylor Mead and Ultra Violet
 David Cronenberg **STEREO OF THE FUTURE** (Canada, 16 & 35mm, 65 mins, colour)
 Steve Dwoskin **TIMES FOR** (GB, 16mm, 80 mins, colour)
 Gelsen Gas **MOMENT** (GB, 16mm, 13 mins, colour)
 Jean-Luc Godard **ANTICLIMAX** (Mexico, 16mm, 90 mins, B/W)
 Robert Kramer **LE GAI SAVOIR** (France, 35mm, 96 mins, colour)
 Saul Landau **BRITISH SOUNDS** (GB, 16mm, 52 mins, colour)
 David Larcher **ICE** (USA, 16mm, 132 mins, B/W)
 Jonas Mekas **FIDEL** (USA, 16mm, 96 mins, colour)
 Werner Nekes **MARE'S TAIL** (GB, 16mm, 150 mins, colour)
 Peter Whitehead **GUNS OF THE TREES** (USA, 16mm, 80 mins, B/W)
 Jean-Luc Godard **KELEK** (Germany, 16mm, 60 mins, B/W)
 Werner Herzog **GURTRUG No. 1** (Germany, 16mm, 12 mins, colour)
 Norman Mailer **BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT** (GB, 16mm, 69 mins, colour)
 anonymous **THE FALL** (GB, 16 & 35mm, 110 mins, colour)
 anonymous **PARALLELS** (GB, 1965, 16mm, 12 mins, colour)

AVAILABLE SHORTLY

Jean-Luc Godard **PRAVDA** (France, 16mm, 58 mins, colour)
 Werner Herzog **LE GAI SAVOIR**—on 16mm
 Norman Mailer **EVEN DWARFS STARTED SMALL** (Germany, 16 & 35mm, 90 mins, B/W)
 Norman Mailer **MAIDSTONE** (USA, 16 & 35mm, 110 mins, colour) with Norman Mailer and Rip Torn

SHORTS ON 16mm

anonymous **CINETRACTS**
 Nick Broomfield **URBAN INSURGENCY IN NORTHERN IRELAND**
 Ben Hayeem **WHO CARES**
 Paul Nicholson **EXTREME UNCTION**
 Peter Robinson **TRIAD**
 Hans Schaal **SUSAN AFTER THE SUGAR HARVEST**
 Jane Sellars **CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION**
 Richard Stanley **LONE RANGER**
 Anthony Stern **NOTHING TO DO WITH ME**
 Grady Watts **MARCH ON WASHINGTON**

Films obtainable from:

The Other Cinema
 12/13 Little Newport St.
 London, WC2H 7JJ
 telephone: 01-734 8508/9
 overseas cables: Others London WC2

Complete catalogue available on request.

Cinema:

The Other Cinema,
 King's Cross Cinema,
 Pentonville Rd,
 London, N.1 (evenings only)
 telephone: 01-278 3062

Editor: Penelope Houston
Associate: David Wilson
Designer: John Harmer
Business Manager: John Smoker

Sight and Sound

International Film Quarterly



Spring 1971

Volume 40 No. 2.

Articles	Fathers and Sons Richard Roud	60
	Bertolucci on The Conformist Marilyn Goldin	64
	Performance Philip French	67
	Trevelyan's Social History: some notes and a chronology David Robinson	70
	New Blood David Pirie	73
	A Terrible Duty is Born Colin L. Westerbeck, Jr.	80
	Kuleshov Ronald Levaco	86
	The Other Face of W. C. Fields Louise Brooks	92
	'Do I Get to Play the Drunk This Time?': an encounter with Howard Hawks Joseph McBride and Michael Wilmington	97
	Making Movies Abraham Polonsky	101
Features	In the Picture	76
	King Lear: Brook and Kozintsev	84
	Correspondence	112
	Notes on Contributors	113
	Film Guide	116
Film Reviews	Little Big Man Philip French	102
	Tristana Julian Jebb	103
	Death in Venice Philip Strick	103
	Death By Hanging David Wilson	104
	One Fine Day Penelope Houston	105
	Husbands Nigel Andrews	106
	The Revolutionary Jan Dawson	106
	Get Carter Tom Milne	107
	Monte Walsh Nigel Andrews	108
	Little Fauss and Big Halsy Jan Dawson	108
	The Music Lovers John Gillett	108
Book Reviews	Andy Warhol: Films and Paintings Richard Roud	110
	Claude Chabrol Tom Milne	110
	The Lonely Artist John Gillett	111
	The Great Movie Stars, etc. John Russell Taylor	111
	Sweden 1 and Sweden 2 Neville Hunnings	111

On the cover: *Squirrel Nutkin* (Wayne Sleep) in the Royal Ballet film *'Tales of Beatrix Potter'*, directed by Reginald Mills.

SIGHT AND SOUND is an independent critical magazine sponsored and published by the British Film Institute. It is not an organ for the expression of official British Film Institute policy; signed articles represent the views of their authors.

Copyright © 1971 by The British Film Institute. EDITORIAL, PUBLISHING AND ADVERTISING OFFICES: British Film Institute, 81 Dean Street, London, W.1. (01-437 4355). Entered as 2nd class matter at the Post Office, New York, N.Y. Printed in England. Published and distributed in the U.S.A. by SIGHT AND SOUND. All American subscriptions and advertising enquiries should be directed to Eastern News Distributors Inc., 155 West 15th Street, New York 10011.

FATHERS AND SONS

Richard Roud

Jean-Louis Trintignant in 'The Conformist'



'It appears to be characteristic of the relationship between father and son that the father should excite in the son both feelings of admiration, love and loyalty, and also impulses of anger, jealousy and self-assertion. The more the son learns to "idolise" his father, developing . . . the "conscience of the sentiment", so that any muttering of jealousy or hostile criticism is suppressed as disloyal, the more acute will become the tension of the inner attitude. It is such an attitude that can find relief in imaginative activity wherein both the love and the repressed hostility have play.'—MAUD BODKIN, *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry*, London, 1934.

Bernardo Bertolucci has described *The Spider's Strategy*, one of the two films he completed in 1970, as 'a sort of psychoanalytical therapy, a journey through the realm of pre-conscious memory.' But even without this hint, and without the knowledge of Bertolucci's recent interest in and exploration of psychoanalysis, it would be evident that both *The Spider's Strategy* and *The Conformist* are linked by more than their 1930s settings and their concern with the problem of Fascism.

Since both films are based on literary works, the surest key to Bertolucci's preoccupations is in the changes he has made in his originals. *The Spider's Strategy* is based on a short story by Borges, *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero*. Set in Ireland in 1824, it could as Borges says just as well have taken place in 'any oppressed and tenacious country'. Bertolucci has set it in the Po Valley of *Before the Revolution*; more precisely it was shot in Sabbioneta, a small Renaissance 'ideal city' between Mantua and Parma, which still survives today with its de Chirico squares and metaphysical arcades, its deserted colonnades: a 16th-century town planner's dream gone to seed.

Like Borges' Kilpatrick, Athos Magnani is the local anti-Fascist hero and martyr. Eventually, however, we learn that in a moment of weakness the great man had betrayed the cause. When this was discovered by his fellow-conspirators, he conceived a grandiose scheme: he must be punished, of course, but the cause itself must not be tarnished; it must be made to seem that he was killed by Them. So the whole town is turned into a vast theatre in which the drama of Magnani's heroism is played out, and he is operatically killed, ostensibly by Fascist elements, during a performance of *Rigoletto*. Both story and film end in the same way: the man who discovers the stratagem decides not to reveal the secret. 'This, too,' says Borges, 'was perhaps foreseen.' The Borges story is only a few pages long; and it is in what Bertolucci has added that the true significance of the film lies. In Borges, the discovery of the stratagem is made by Kilpatrick's great-grandson and biographer, some hundred years after the event. In the film it is made by the son of Athos Magnani. Bertolucci has provided the 'hero' not only with a son, but also with a mistress, and it is she who sets the action in motion. Years after Magnani's child had left the town, the dead man's mistress, Draifa,* sees his photograph in a Milan newspaper and sends for him, presumably to avenge his father's murder; and, like the Ghost in *Hamlet*, almost her first word to him is 'Revenge'.

But his first 'encounter' with the father he never knew takes place on his arrival in Sabbioneta (or Tara, as Bertolucci calls it)

when he comes upon his statue in the square. As he circles round it, the image of the father eclipses him and he disappears behind it. This scene is the first clue that the central subject of the film is to be the relationship between father and son, even if one did not know the enormous importance of Bertolucci's relation to his own father: cf. his statement in an unpublished interview: 'I first began to want to make films in the desire, the need, to do something different from what my father did. He was a poet, and I wanted to compete with him, but not by doing the same thing. I used to write poetry myself, but I realised that I would lose that battle, so I had to find a different terrain on which to compete.'

This is made even clearer by the fact that Bertolucci has the actor Giulio Brogi playing both father and son, and Alida Valli, without a change of make-up, playing the Draifa the father knew and the Draifa of today, some thirty years later. Her relationship with Athos the son is as equivocal as one might expect. When his first attempts at discovering his father's assassin fail, and he is tempted to throw the whole thing up, it is she who persuades him to stay. Constantly she seems to be attempting to fuse his image with that of his father, as in the scene where she persuades him to wear his father's old clothes—which, of course, fit him quite neatly. And in the sequence in which he faints, she undresses him in a manner which is less than motherly. Eventually it becomes unclear in some scenes whether Brogi is playing father or son: when he feels sick in the automobile, we are not sure whether it is the son who is ill or the father—or both. Later, when the camera tracks Brogi through the woods, Bertolucci cuts so fast from father to son that we are unsure who is running—and from what.

We can see how far Bertolucci has come along the road of self-knowledge—and the expression of this new awareness—by comparing his treatment of what we will have to call the Oedipal theme in this film and in his earlier *Before the Revolution*. In that film, the hero's father is significantly reduced to one or two appearances. Fabrizio's friend Agostino does indeed run away from his father, but for Fabrizio this possibility seems to have been censored. On the other hand, his affair with his aunt (his mother's sister) seems even more significant in the light of

the relationship between Draifa and the second Athos Magnani in *The Spider's Strategy*. In a scene from the original script of *Before the Revolution* which was later cut, Fabrizio in his distress calls out for Gina: 'Where are you, I can't hear you . . . Mama?' Later in the film when Gina starts to compare herself with her sister, Fabrizio's mother, he makes her stop: the significance of the comparison is more than he can bear. Still later, Gina remarks that the reason she likes him is because he is not yet a man, underlining the equivocal nature of their relationship.

The discovery by the son in *The Spider's Strategy* that his father was not, after all, an untarnished hero might have been a liberating experience; but somehow it is not. The personality of the father is still too strong: he realises that in Tara he will always be only the son of Athos Magnani. Perhaps for this reason he refuses to divulge the truth. He has still, he thinks, enough strength to run away, to flee the all-devouring father. But when he gets to the railway station, he is caught in the spider's web, caught fast like Oedipus in the snare of the gods: he can never leave Tara. The train is announced as delayed; first by forty minutes, then by two hours. 'Sometimes,' the station-master remarks, 'they forget about us altogether.' And as Athos walks over to the tracks, he discovers that they are completely overgrown with weeds: no train will ever pass here again.

But this image of the past overwhelming the present, the landscape taking over man's constructions, is not the first such in the film. Even behind the credits, in the naive paintings of Ligabue, we see images of the jungle, of lions ready to pounce. And like some primeval jungle, Draifa's villa is invaded by her garden: overgrown with lush vegetation, dissolved into green. In Athos' journey through the town, at the end of every street, of every perspective, there is the countryside, waiting, ready, as it were, to pounce. When he goes to visit the friend of his father who runs an outdoor cinema, he helps to roll up the screen: suddenly, as the canvas is hauled up, the surrounding landscape invades what one took to be a thoroughly urban scene. Shots of maize fields punctuate the film throughout, reminding us of the precarious equilibrium of the town, forever at the mercy of the 'jungle'. And it is no accident that the incident that breaks his father's nerve is the escape of a lion into the streets of Tara.

Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny, we learn at school. And the past of the town, of all towns, of civilisation itself, is shown as being just as tentatively overcome as the son's conquest of his past, his attempt to escape from his heredity, from his father, from his destiny. The constant pan shots and great circling movements of the camera never let us forget this, for they serve to incorporate into each shot the presence of the surrounding jungle, symbolising, no doubt, the primitive, the archetypal drama that is being played out.

And perhaps Bertolucci's fondness for 'double movement', that is to say, making his camera and his characters move at the same time, represents movement not only in space but in time, creating a kind of eternal present which is a never-ending repetition of the past. *Rigoletto* in the theatre the night

* So-called because her father was an ardent Dreyfusard. The name first appears in the script of *Before the Revolution* in a scene that was never shot.



Giulio Brogi in 'The Spider's Strategy'

his father was killed; *Rigoletto* in the street on the loudspeakers on the night in which the son 'dies' (i.e., is condemned by the all-embracing web). Is it a coincidence that, although unwittingly, Rigoletto is also responsible for the death of his child?

But Bertolucci has not simply grafted this Oedipal theme on to a story of Fascism and the idealisation of authority which it represents: there is a more significant and complex relationship between the film's politics and its psychology.

Bertolucci was born in 1941, so that both *The Spider's Strategy* and *The Conformist* are concerned with a period he never knew. One's most intimate acquaintance with the past comes precisely from one's family, in his case from his father. It would be much too pat—and not very interesting—if Bertolucci's own father had been a Fascist. In fact, he was very much not. But Bertolucci's relationship with his father, as expressed in these two films, is interesting in so far as it is not a case of a simple or obvious rejection. In fact, he and his father were and are very close, so that it becomes more a question of an essential affirmation of identity: the specific problem of being the son of an intellectual. 'The more the son learns to idolise his father . . . the more acute will become the tension of the inner attitude . . .'

In *The Spider's Strategy*, the father ultimately triumphs: not only does he impose his will on his son, he also reduces that son

to being just that—not a man, simply the son of his father. The relationships of the central character in *The Conformist* with his father, and with the various father-figures that dot the film, are still more complex; but they contribute to a better understanding of this subterranean theme which flows so importantly through both pictures, and which was already more obscurely present in Bertolucci's earlier films.

The Conformist, however, is a much more complex work, for in it Bertolucci has settled for nothing less than a re-creation of the world of the Fascist 1930s: all Rome is his stage, and it is peopled by a large and diverse cast. Until now, his films have been intimate in scale and scope; here he gives us an almost Balzacian portrait of a dying civilisation. While Trintignant's interpretation of the conformist is brilliant—only a slightly twisted smile and a tight-hipped scamper betray his plausibly charming exterior—this is not a one-character film. The petit-bourgeois world is exemplified in his fiancée's apartment, an interpretation, not a copy of a 1930s décor: its venetian blinds casting jazzy patterns on the wall and its gramophone scratching out nostalgic tangos are the expression of the life that is lived within these art-déco walls. And when, ten years later, we find the conformist Marcello and his wife installed therein, the difference in the state of the flat tells us what has hap-

pened in the intervening period: the war, and the toppling not only of the regime, but of a world.

Bertolucci has always attempted to relate psychological problems to a social context, but this film is more successful than either *Before the Revolution* or *Partner* in achieving this integration of Freud and Marx, partly because the relationship between Bertolucci and his hero is less direct, partly because his canvas is broader, more dramatic. The earlier films had their set-pieces, but the Communist picnic or the opera première in *Before the Revolution* had little dramatic relevance: their importance was thematic. In this film, every sequence, every lyrical flourish—the blind people's ball and the Parisian dance-hall; the sleeping-car honeymoon and the murderous car chase; the radio station and the Chinese restaurant—is both spectacular and significant. Story line and psychological undercurrents at last come electrifyingly together.

Like *The Spider's Strategy*, *The Conformist* is an adaptation of a pre-existing literary work. But Bertolucci has cut a good many elements from Moravia's novel, and added more; and once again, it is in these suppressions and additions that one looks for the most reliable evidence of the film's deeper significance. Both novel and film tell somewhat the same story: a young boy is the object of a homosexual assault, which he escapes only by shooting his assailant. The result of this adolescent incident is to imbue

the boy with an overpowering thirst for normality. When Marcello (Jean-Louis Trintignant) grows up, he joins the Fascist party, and is so desirous of total identification with the establishment that he even volunteers for counter-intelligence work. His first assignment is to go to Paris to make contact with Quadri, his old university tutor, now an anti-Fascist leader in exile. Meanwhile, he has coolly decided to marry a nice middle-class girl (Stefania Sandrelli) who is 'good in bed, good in the kitchen'. Their honeymoon will serve as cover for his mission to Paris. By the time they get there, however, his orders have been changed: Quadri is to be killed.

After the mission is accomplished, Marcello and Giulia return to Rome. The last section of both film and novel takes place on the day Mussolini is deposed, the day when Marcello discovers that Lino, the man he thought he had killed all those years ago, is actually still alive. Suddenly his guilt over the murder (if not of having somehow 'provoked' the homosexual assault) seems to vanish, leaving a great void in his life. In the novel, he and his wife and child are killed by enemy aircraft on the following day as they take refuge in the country. The end of the film is quite different, but this is only one of the key changes Bertolucci has made.

First of all, the book tells the story chronologically; whereas Bertolucci has chosen to frame most of it in the sequence of the murder of Quadri and his wife. Significantly these flashbacks leave out almost all of Marcello's early life. Moravia had provided a somewhat old-fashioned 'psychological case-history' to establish basic aggressions and fears; we first meet young Marcello killing lizards. We see much more of his relationship to his father and we are even treated to a Freudian chestnut: Marcello stumbles upon the 'primal scene'—he sees his parents having sexual intercourse.

Moravia fully paints Marcello's school-days as one long torture: the other boys find him effeminate, and even try to beat him up

and tie a petticoat on him. Further, Moravia establishes the father's incipient madness, preparing us for Marcello's visit to his father in an insane asylum just before his own wedding.

In contrast, Bertolucci shows only the attempted seduction of Marcello by the chauffeur Lino; and this comes some twenty minutes into the film as part of Marcello's pre-marital confession and absolution. A few other elements are omitted from the film (a second homosexual pick-up attempt in Paris); but as in *The Spider's Strategy*, Bertolucci's additions are generally more significant. Most important, he has invented a new character, Italo, who serves as a confidant for Marcello but also plays the more telling role of one among three father-figures. It is he, we are led to believe, who has introduced Marcello to the doctrines of Fascism, and secured his entrée into the upper echelons of the government. Significantly, Italo is blind—like the real father who is mad, and the ex-tutor who is stunted and short-sighted.

Another minor but not insignificant change is in the treatment of Marcello's mother's lover, the chauffeur Alberi. In the book, Marcello is content simply to express his jealous dislike of the man; in the film, he has him thrown out of the house, and probably expelled from the country. Another change: in the novel Marcello's father is incapable of any communication; in the film, Marcello has a very unpleasant scene with him in the asylum. The father, presumably an ex-soldier, is taunted by Marcello about the 'punitive expeditions' in which he had been involved: 'Did you use clubs on them, or just castor oil; did you torture them?' Finally, 'Did you actually kill?' The father refuses to answer, and growing more and more upset grabs hold of a straitjacket and folds his arms into it himself—asking, as it were, to be restrained. The gesture is moving, but it also reminds one of the way in which Marcello always holds himself: legs close together, even while walking or running, always restraining himself. Marcello's sad-

istic torturing of his impotent father is perhaps self-torture: he himself has engaged on a career which will lead to torture and murder. It is also an indication of how Marcello may eventually end up, and a telling exposition of the unbearable load of conflicting desires.

The two major changes, apart from the introduction of Italo, come towards the end of the story. In the novel, Marcello's mission is only to identify Quadri to an underling; he himself is to have no part in the killing. In the film, although he is accompanied (indeed chauffeured) by his assistant Manganiello, he is supposed to perform the act himself. When the time comes, however, he is seen to be incapable of action—paralysed, impotent. And just as he got Manganiello to dispose of his mother's lover, so it is Manganiello who actually kills Quadri and his wife. It is as if Marcello's shooting of Lino has rendered him forever incapable of action.

The novel ends, as I have said, with death in an air attack. In the film, Marcello discovers the still living Lino in a Coliseum crowded with squatters and refugees, one of whom Lino is trying to seduce. Marcello's rage when he accuses Lino of Quadri's murder frightens the chauffeur away, and Marcello is left with the handsome young Roman Lino had been trying so hard to seduce. The boy starts to strip down for the night; Marcello, fascinated, stands watching. In the last shot of the film, his glance fixed on the boy's naked body, he blinks. The implication is that the discovery that he had not killed Lino after all, coupled with the shock of the end of Fascism, of his career, have so shaken him that he is at last able to face what has probably always been his true nature. And this ending, along with the other changes, gives a meaning to the film which is quite different from that of the novel.

In a sense, Bertolucci's *Conformist* can be taken as his attempt to overthrow authority in all its forms. There is Marcello's true father reduced to an insane asylum; which, significantly, resembles in its architecture and accessories, and the way they are filmed, both the Fascist Ministry we have seen earlier and the Fascist headquarters in the brothel we are shortly to see. And just as his 'replacement', the mother's chauffeur, is ignominiously sent packing, so Marcello's aggressive taunting of his father is equivalent to a total rejection.

Secondly, there is the father-figure, Italo. In the climactic last scene on the day of defeat, Marcello runs into him in the streets of Rome. And the blind Italo has never, as it were, been blinder. As they walk across the Sant' Angelo bridge, all the trappings of dictatorship—the enormous busts of Mussolini, the larger-than-life imperial eagles—that we saw in the Ministry scenes are being unceremoniously dumped into the Tiber. They walk on through the streets to the Coliseum, where the encounter with Lino will take place, preceded by throngs of marching people singing the Red Flag, the Internationale, *Fratelli d'Italia*. When Marcello discovers that Lino is not dead, he turns on him; but he also tries to transfer his burden of guilt to Italo. He denounces him to the crowd not only as a Fascist, but as an assassin, as a homosexual. It was Italo who had first expounded the doctrine of normality to Marcello, and the irony

'The Spider's Strategy': Giulio Brogi and Alida Valli



inherent in a blind man praising normality was pointed in a scene in which Italo claimed never to be mistaken in detecting normality or its opposite. As he says these words, the camera slyly moves down to show us that the man who never makes a mistake has on shoes of different colours.

Logically enough, we find that the impotent fathers are doubled in *The Conformist* by the aggressive chauffeurs. The homosexual Lino is a chauffeur by trade, and his picking up the young Marcello and taking him for a ride sets a certain pattern. Manganiello, Marcello's supposed subordinate, also acts twice as chauffeur, 'picking him up' as he makes for his mother's home, and more importantly, driving him to the scene of the assassination. Bertolucci links the two episodes by cross-cutting Marcello's attempts to be let out of the car (cf. *Spider's Strategy*, when both father and son want to be let out), both in the frame story of the ride to the assassination and in the ride with Lino which will end with Marcello shooting the chauffeur. The passivity of the back seat role (cf. also *Partner* where there is a similar situation), the sense of being 'driven' by someone older, is not unrelated to Marcello's sense that he is not his own master. And even while he is physically guiding the blind Italo in the early scenes, he is actually being led, psychologically and philosophically, by Italo—the blind leading the blind, as it were.

The theme of blindness also occurs in the episodes devoted to the short-sighted Quadri, with his shuttered flat in which he reminds Marcello of Plato's myth of the cave. While Marcello is being driven to his fatal rendezvous, he tells his chauffeur of a strange dream he has had. He has gone blind, and he goes to Switzerland for an operation; it is Quadri who conducts the operation, and the result is successful: he can see again. So we have the true father insane, Italo blind, but the myopic Quadri as the man who could restore Marcello's sight. The reference to Switzerland is somewhat curious, especially when one bears in mind that the address given for Quadri in Paris, as well as his telephone number, are the actual address and number of none other than Jean-Luc Godard. Hardly a coincidence, of course, especially when one remembers that Quadri's wife was originally to have been played by Anne Wiazemsky.

What is the significance of this detail? Is it simply a private joke, a pun? I think not, although obviously whatever significance it has is bound to be lost on 99 per cent of the film's audience. Nevertheless let us consider: Godard and Bertolucci have been very close friends and Bertolucci has certainly been influenced by Godard. Since the events of 1968, however, their friendship has diminished as Bertolucci's political evolution ceased to parallel Godard's. We also know that since Bertolucci signed to make *The Conformist* for 'the enemy' (actually for Paramount), he has had no further communication with Godard. It is also true that both this film and *The Spider's Strategy* mark an almost total liberation from the Godard influence. By equating Quadri with Godard, Bertolucci is perhaps establishing once and for all their separation—one that was forced upon him by Godard's rejection, but which is none the less real and perhaps definitive.

Bertolucci's sense of spectacle as well as

of decoration has always been more instinctive than that of Godard, but in *Partner* one got the feeling that he was not giving it its head, that he was purposely depriving himself of what he did best—as, indeed, he had to, given the subject of that film. Here in *The Conformist* he lets rip; one sequence after another is breathtaking in its spectacular virtuosity. I have already mentioned the scenes in the Ministry, the insane asylum, and the brothel; the other great set-piece is the *guinguette* at Joinville, beginning with the suggestive tango of the two girls (Sandrelli and Dominique Sanda), and culminating with a snake-like farandole around, through, inside and out with the crowd of dancers exploding with the sheer joy of movement.

But even simple scenes are brilliantly conceived, like that early one in the radio station with the Andrews-sister team followed by Italo's propaganda speech. Bertolucci shoots this in such a way that we see neither the speaking Italo nor the watching Marcello; rather both of them are reflected on the glass wall which separates them. The resulting spatial ambiguity is not only handsome in itself but, like Quadri's recounting of Plato's cave myth, tells us something about both men and the regime they serve. The already famous still of Marcello, flowers in hand, walking past the great marble monument inscribed with thousands of names, is even more impressive in the film, since it consists actually of three shots, each taken from a widely different angle, but all contrasting this tiny, almost ludicrous figure with the enormous slab which symbolises the cause he supports. The discrepancy between the two, the massive weight soon to crush Marcello, is yet another example of Bertolucci's ability to sum up in one telling image.

There may be something masochistic about Bertolucci's identification—in this particular instance—of himself with Marcello and of Godard with Quadri; but the important thing is not the very limited similarity of the two, but the act itself. If one can forget for a moment the *character* of Marcello, one can see in his story a metaphor of Bertolucci's liberation from the past; and one can even see in Marcello's final self-revelation a symbol of Bertolucci's separation from his father and from all the father-substitutes. In this context, it is not without significance that his next film is to be a love story between a man and woman who are roughly contemporaries. This may not sound very striking: seventy-five per cent of all films are about exactly that. But not Bertolucci's. Leaving out the first film, with its story by Pasolini (another father-figure, by the way), and which in any case has no protagonist, the Bertolucci heroes have been involved with women much older than themselves (*Before the Revolution*, *The Spider's Strategy*), or narcissistically with their own double (*Partner*). Even in *The Conformist* Marcello's relations with his wife could hardly be called passionate. So this mass disposal of father-figures is a very important step in Bertolucci's career.

Another interpretation is of course possible: one could say that the new direction Bertolucci has taken corresponds to Fabrizio's betrayal of the revolution—that,

objectively, Bertolucci like him is simply rejoining the ranks of the bourgeoisie. You could say that if you were an old-line Marxist aesthete; but results are what count, and these last two films are so much more successful in their own terms than *Partner* that one is allowed to doubt the correctness of such a hidebound judgment. Just as Straub has declared his inability to make 'instant history', to make films about current events, so Bertolucci has tacitly acknowledged where his abilities lie. Having now swept away the past, having in effect filmed his Declaration of Independence, he has before him a clean slate; and one can hardly wait to see what he is going to write on it.



Bertolucci on **The Conformist**

**An Interview with
Marilyn Goldin**

The Conformist is a narrative film, but in it you blend fantasy and reality, you pass from suspense to surrealism to politics. It's as if you were always in the process of exploding the form and then seizing it again.

That's because of the freedom I give myself in shooting. It's only in the actual décor with a precise space, precise lighting, the camera there in front of one, that one discovers and makes the film. In the scenario the film was less varied; it was more of a single colour. But in shooting a great deal depends. . . . For me, actors are very important: they're the ones who make the characters, and the characters in the script disappear before the reality. So a great deal depends on my rapport with the actors. If the actor hasn't slept the night before, the scene will turn out a certain way; another way if he's drunk too much, and so on. And that change is part of my freedom in shooting. If I like a thing I do it, even if it's contradictory to all the rest. At the end, you will see if it was really good. If it doesn't finally enter into the whole, the ensemble, that means it wasn't any good.

There are moments when the actors adopt poses of Thirties stars—for instance, Dominique Sanda leaning against a door with a cigarette in her mouth and her

thumbs hooked in her slacks pockets is classically Dietrich... Or Sandrelli, in the scene where she dances to the American record...

Directing actors means, above all, liking people, liking certain things about people. I looked at Sanda and I imagined her like that, and we tried it and it worked because it was already in her. It's really a matter of discovering and bringing out of the actors what they really are, and nothing else. Characters must be built on that—on what the actors are in themselves. I never ask them to interpret something pre-existent; except for dialogue and even that changes a lot. You could say I follow the actors like a TV cameraman filming an interview; but the result is very different from television.

That's unexpected because the film is stylishly 'acted', not at all like *cinéma vérité*. The impression is that Trintignant, for instance, is certainly giving a performance.

But he is acting. Still, I think Trintignant is that person, that this is the first film in which he is himself. If he reads this, he's going to be furious. But I chose Trintignant because when I think of him two adjectives immediately come to mind: moving and sinister. And these are qualities of the character. The point of departure is reality, then the actor transcends it. Because there is a camera which moves and which is itself an actor, an actor who makes the others react. The camera is a character like Trintignant, a living presence, not a recording machine.

In Italy, it is well known that Verdi was a revolutionary as well as a composer and now a cultural institution. Were you intending a reference to his politics as well as his music in *The Spider's Strategy*?

No. It meant a great deal to me that this should be a regional, artisan film. I used many different elements from the crafts of the region and Verdi, the music of the region, is one of them. Of course there is the political significance of Verdi, but that interested me less. Also, Verdi corresponds for me—and thus for the son of Athos Magnani—with a mythic dimension, and that works very well with the mythical stature of the father. Mythic music for a mythic personage.

Your use of colour in the two films is very different. In *Spider's Strategy* it is very beautiful, almost lyrical. In *The Conformist* it is as though you were trying to use colour almost cruelly—ugly colours like that harsh neon red in the credits, for instance.

There is a technical explanation for that. In *Spider's Strategy* we used very little light, whereas *The Conformist* is lighted like a 1930s studio film; even when we were on location, there were a lot of lights and lighting effects, like that red, or the rays in Sandrelli's apartment, or the blacks when the professor tells the Myth of the Cave.

Even so, you were looking for... For instance, in the sequence when Trintignant goes to the dancing school and takes Sanda into the adjoining room behind the curtains. The lighting there is a kind of sinister blue-green and makes her ugly. It isn't erotic when she undresses, because the colour supplies the emotional tone.

That was an attempt to make the film at given moments more or less impressionistic, like the interior of the dancing school, and at other moments more or less expressionist, like the adjoining room. There was an effort there to violate reality, to do a style of photography that wasn't modern. When she

undresses she is going to the slaughterhouse; which is why I used that light. In fact, simply as colours, the tones are much more violent in *The Spider's Strategy*. There, however, they are used in another perspective.

The lighting of *The Conformist* is very Sternbergian.

Yes, indeed. Because in *Strategy* I was more influenced by life, while in *The Conformist* I was more influenced by movies. One could say the point of departure was cinema; and the cinema I like is Sternberg, Ophuls and Welles.

What about your work on the continuous movement and contrast of light within a scene? The ball of the blind, for instance, begins in almost total blackness: then all at once it's lighted, but lighted on blind people who themselves remain in the dark. In effect, there is always a change of lighting during a sequence; and the change is often radical.

You know, this is the first film where I controlled the lighting myself in the old, truly professional classical sense. Most of the young directors reject lighting as something cheap or kitsch; but on this film I really came to understand what you can do with light. You can get unbelievable effects which help the psychology, the narrative, the whole language of the film. When Sandrelli and Marcello see each other for the first time, there are those shuttered windows that refract the light, rays that pass. It helps a lot to establish the atmosphere of the house.

After *Before the Revolution* you seemed to leave the bourgeoisie as a subject. Now you take it up again with two bourgeois heroes...

Yes. One doesn't escape...

'The Conformist': Jean-Louis Trintignant



And both of them grapple with a Fascist past. That seems to be a theme in your work, that the sins of the father are always visited on the son . . . Fabrizio, then Athos Magnani fils and Marcello.

Yes, Fabrizio . . . it's true. My own father was anti-Fascist, but obviously I feel that the whole bourgeoisie is my father. And Fascism was invented by the *petit bourgeois*. And there's the fact of having made two films about the past, not having arrived at making films about the present. Or rather, they are two films that arrive at the present by speaking of the past. . . . On top of that, *The Conformist* is a story about me and Godard. When I gave the professor Godard's phone number and address, I did it for a joke, but afterwards I said to myself, 'Well, maybe all that has some significance . . . I'm Marcello and I make Fascist movies and I want to kill Godard who's a revolutionary, who makes revolutionary movies and who was my teacher . . .'

Do you have perhaps a slightly guilty conscience about having made *The Conformist* with Hollywood finance, money from the 'American Empire', exactly in the sense that Godard now refuses it?

No, not at all, not in that sense. I feel ill at ease in the great contradiction of Cinema, which is so difficult to resolve. Jean-Luc's way is *his* way, and that is important, but I don't believe it is the only one or that everybody has to follow it. I think he chose the way he did because he didn't want to be a leader any more. He felt like being left alone.

Throughout *The Conformist*, a relation is drawn between politics and sexuality, just as in *Before the Revolution*. In the final analysis Fabrizio's only revolutionary act is to sleep with his aunt. And when Gina leaves him, he leaves the Communist party. So he has acted out the revolution on an emotional level. Marcello's politics seem to derive from the same source. Did you change the motivation from the novel?

Yes, in the sense that in the book the story of the conformist is a tragedy and, as in the Greek tragedies, everything is related to Fate. Here I substituted Marcello's unconscious—a psychoanalytic explanation,

that is—for the presence of Destiny in the book. And that's also why I changed the end of the story; in the novel Marcello and his wife are killed, and this is presented as God's justice. Marcello is really a very complex character, searching to conform because of his great, violent anti-conformism. A true conformist is someone who has no wish to change: to wish to conform is really to say that the truth is the contrary. But what is tremendous in the novel is the intuition about the character of Marcello: his monstrosity has tragic dimensions. Transforming Destiny into the Unconscious, of course, also affects the rapport between sexuality and politics.

What do you think is the connection between them?

I think the most important discovery I made after the events of May, 1968, was that I wanted the revolution not to help the poor but for myself. I wanted the world to change for me. I discovered the individual level in political revolution. And for me that remains true at the same time that I repeat Sartre's phrase which is quoted in *Spider's Strategy*: 'A man is made of all men. He is equal to all of them and all of them equal him.' I'm sure that some young occidental Maoists will reproach me for *The Conformist* because it's beautiful to look at and because I mix dirty things like sex with a pure thing like politics. But I think that's Catholic, moralistic reasoning, and I find that the great foolishness of young Maoists in Italy is their slogan, 'Serve the People'. My slogan is 'Serve Myself', because only by serving myself am I able to serve the people—that is, to be a part of the people, not serve them.

To pass to the character played by Sandrelli. She is treated in a comic fashion throughout the film and then, when she speaks at the end about her husband's crime, she suddenly becomes very sinister, a silent conspirator.

Good, because I believe that in the world I present in the film, no one is saved. Not even Sandrelli, who is very appealing and foolish, a cross between a Hollywood character and an Italian *petite bourgeoisie*. She is also a part of this monstrous world of

bourgeois Fascism. So she becomes like that because I want no one to save himself. And no one does. Not even the professor and his wife. I didn't want to paint a hero's portrait with the professor, as Resnais did for instance with his old Spanish Civil War fighter. For me the professor and his wife were the other side of the medallion of bourgeois Fascism, linked to it by a chain which is decadence. They are sympathetic, they are on the right side of the barricades, but they are still bourgeois and they are not saved.

It's true that the only relationship you don't illuminate entirely is the one between Anna and the professor.

Because I didn't want to plunge the dagger in even deeper. Otherwise, I would have had to say that the professor knew very well that his wife was a lesbian, and that it gave him pleasure to see her dance with Stefania. It's not very healthy and not important for the story. And people like the professor are really dead, they paid with their lives. It's a bit ferocious to treat them like that.

There is still some nostalgia in Italy for the Fascist period, isn't there?

Yes! That's why I say *The Conformist* is a film on the present. And when I say that I want to make the public leave with a sense of malaise, perhaps feeling the presence of something obscurely sinister, it's because I want them to realise that however the world has changed, feelings have remained the same. Feelings, that is, about normality and abnormality. . . . For Italy, the film is really very savage.

You know, I've done thirty interviews and no one ever asks me why I moved the camera in a particular way, or why I used tracking shots, or how long they were. . . . Take the construction of the *bal populaire*. Giulia dances the tango with Anna with the camera close, and they kiss; then there is a circle of people around them and the camera is high up. They begin to do a sort of farandole and the people follow them, and while the farandole grows the camera descends on a dolly, taking in the orchestra. Then, in the next shot, we see Marcello and the professor watching them, amused. People pass dancing in front of them, and someone takes the professor's hand. Marcello stays alone. Behind him there is a window, and as Giulia passes outside it, leading the dance, the camera leaves Marcello to follow her and to arrive on Manganiello, the professional assassin, who is sitting across the room. Marcello is tapping his cigarette packet on the table, following the rhythm of the dance. When he sees Manganiello he stops, and Manganiello looks at him, and then he starts tapping. . . . So, these are the things. . . . *découpage*, camera, technique. It is only through technique that one arrives at doing things.

Do I dare ask a last question on structure? It seems that if one scene is in daylight the next shot will be in darkness; or if a sequence finishes on a close-up, the next will begin in long shot. It is as though you were constantly breaking the atmosphere of the preceding scene, instead of prolonging or varying it. True or not true?

Maybe, but not consciously. I made *The Conformist* very freely, which is why it is an easier film for the public. When I made *Partner* I was obsessed by a kind of neurosis of style, of language. ■

'The Conformist': Dominique Sanda, Stefania Sandrelli



PERFORMANCE



Philip French

With its hallucinogenic mushrooms, its direct equation of the underworld with respectable society, its obtrusively restless visual style, *Performance* runs the gamut from Henry Livings' *Eh?* to Costa-Gavras' *Z* by way of Fritz Lang's *M*. There is the noticeable influence of such contemporary sages as R. D. Laing (*The Politics of Experience and the Bird of Paradise*), Norman O. Brown (*Life Against Death*) and Erving Goffman (most especially the chapter on 'Performances' in his *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*), an elaborate score that combines rock numbers by Mick Jagger and Indian-style music by Jack Nitzsche (no kin, as *Time* would say, to Germany's famed philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche), rib-nudging references to painters like Magritte, Peter Blake, Richard Hamilton and Francis Bacon, the looming presence throughout of Jorge Luis Borges, and lurking beneath it all the ethos of the so-called underground and its cinema.

Coupled with the much publicised troubles that the makers have had with their distributors, and to a lesser extent with the censors, it's not surprising therefore that the

film has been acclaimed as an urgent mind-blowing revelation or dismissed as a trendily mindless confection. There is certainly ample evidence to support both views. Yet

for all its faults I found it a most engaging movie, and I have yet to meet anyone (though some there must surely be) prepared to deny its manifest technical merits—and for this credit must go individually to Nicolas Roeg for his virtuoso camerawork and to Donald Cammell for an inventive, often very funny script; and to Roeg and Cammell jointly as co-directors for the remarkable acting (or should one say performances?) they've elicited from their oddly assorted cast.

Fundamentally *Performance* is a crime movie (which may or may not explain why Warner Brothers initially took such exception to it), didactic in immediate aim, metaphorical in ultimate ambition (or pretension—for the jokey surface conceals an underlying portentousness), and intermittently surrealist in character. What appears on the screen is often elliptical and deliberately ambiguous, and I do not pretend to under-



Vendetta for a gangster. Chas (James Fox) floored in the ruins of his flat.

stand (or really worry about) certain aspects. For instance, the opening frames which seem to be documentary material from some Cape Kennedy space-shot may or may not be intended as some latterday equivalent of the eye-slashing that prefaces *Un Chien Andalou*; several people I've spoken to can't recall having seen them. If I saw what I thought I saw, the implication is of some sort of trip out of this world that, as an analogy to Buñuel's razor, might be related to the high decibel music and absorption in technological equipment by which the underground attempts, in contradictory fashion, to dissociate itself from mundane reality. But as I say I could be wrong.

Reduced to its bare narrative bones, the film is that old Hollywood stand-by, the confrontation between the criminal-on-the-run and the inhabitants of his place of temporary refuge. Traditionally in these circumstances the crook will gain a new sense of humanity and the occupied household will achieve a fresh solidarity from the experience. One could make up a whole NFT season from these films. For there are alternatives that propose more interesting interchanges, as in the hollowly pretentious *Petrified Forest* where the washed-out, Eliot-quoting intellectual (Leslie Howard) gets the gangster to kill him, or *49th Parallel* where the etiolated, Mann-quoting intellectual (Howard again) abandons his cherished

pacifism when faced by two Nazi fugitives. Then there's the glib situation in *The Dark Past* in which a mentally disturbed criminal is swiftly psychoanalysed and rehabilitated by a smug psychiatrist whose home he enters; and in terms of black comedy we have Roman Polanski's *Cul-de-Sac*, with the simple-minded crook becoming the victim of his deeply disturbed hosts.

Performance has something in common with all these films, with the initial difference that the fugitive criminal Chas Devlin (James Fox) is the apparently well-adjusted member of square society and that his place of refuge is the home of the self-elected social outcast, a former pop star called Turner (Mick Jagger) who has lost his 'demon'. Chas is a strong-arm man who has threatened the respectable front of his employer, the homosexual London racketeer Harry Flowers, by committing a murder. On the run from the law and from his former associates, Chas takes the basement room in the Notting Hill retreat of the hermit-like former pop performer by passing himself off as a night-club juggler.

In the belief that he is having his photograph taken for a forged passport, Chas submits to letting Turner and his two bisexual female companions, the well-built Pherber (Anita Pallenberg) and the boyish (to Chas 'skinny') Lucy (Michèle Breton) play with his identity even further, until under the influence of covertly administered drugs he is completely disoriented and drawn into their private world. The phlegmatic Pherber's interest in Chas is seemingly disinterested, almost therapeutic, while Turner's is more personal, possibly demonic. He seems to recognise in the unhappy criminal a guinea-pig that in the controlled environment of his flat he can play with—much as Prospero worked on the castaways—and so examine the violence he once generated in the audiences from which he has fled. Eventually Flowers' henchmen come to take Chas away for a fatal drive in the country, but before going the intruder—virtually at the singer's request—shoots Turner dead. Or at least he appears to do so, for there is the same calculated confusion between fantasy and reality, and even as to whom we are watching, that Bergman achieved in *Persona*, one of the many movies (another obvious one would be John Boorman's *Point Blank*) that have influenced *Performance*.

As a crime picture the film works very well. The first half-hour in which we see Chas going diligently about his work is perhaps the best and (from what one has read of the Richardsons and Krays) the most authentic account the cinema has given us of organised crime in Britain. There is a brooding menace to which no one is invulnerable, brilliantly etched portraits of crooks (especially Johnny Shannon as the slimy, ingratiating Flowers, but he's only one in a whole gallery), dialogue that sounds like taped conversations edited by Pinter.

Unfortunately, Cammell and Roeg do not restrict themselves entirely to subtle suggestions in establishing Chas' ostensible self-assurance and neatly organised life, or in making their other point that legitimate business and organised crime share a similar language and morality. They sometimes resort to sledgehammer blows as blatant as party slogans lowered from the flies in a

Brecht play; as for instance in cross-cutting between a commercial fraud case at the Old Bailey and Chas going about his work of intimidation to further Flowers' business 'mergers'. One gathers, however, that the elliptical style and overemphasis of the underworld sequences was partly due to a considerable condensation of the opening section demanded by the American distributors, who were anxious for their star property, Mick Jagger, to make an earlier appearance.

I have spoken of the film's didactic aims, metaphysical aspirations and surrealistic mode, and it is perhaps most easy to look at these elements through the picture's formal strategy—a series of mirror images, antitheses, puns, visual associations and mystical connections that vary from the crass to the relatively profound. At a didactic level we have a confrontation between love and hate, male and female, underworld and underground, between two drop-outs, one with a sure sense of his masculine identity, the other experimenting with new life-styles. As drop-outs, fugitives from their assigned or elective roles, Chas has fallen through enjoying his work too much, not appreciating that he is a cog in a wheel; Turner has withdrawn, more obscurely, as a result of questioning his function and the uncontrollable forces it released. Chas' underworld, however, is part of society, dependent upon it, offering no threat; Turner's underground, in its naïvely idealised aspect, is a genuine revolutionary alternative. In the first part of the film, characters are always looking into mirrors narcissistically, their sexual aberrations are viewed as departures from a prescribed norm, they are plagued with guilt, if only of a kind imposed upon them by Cammell and Roeg. In the second part, Turner and his androgynous seraglio use mirrors and cameras to probe beyond, to question the surface of reality; they have abandoned the notion of fixed sexual and social roles.

Both Chas and Turner are 'performers'; Turner in the more usually understood sense, Chas in the terms of underworld argot for his kind of dramatic, stylish thuggery. But Turner and Pherber introduce Chas to the notion that everyone engaged in social activity is a performer, playing a variety of roles either consciously (Chas pretending to be a juggler) or unconsciously (Chas believing himself to be a tough he-man). In this way the film is making a rather obvious assault upon the complacency of square society in the name of an open, honest, uninhibited, self-interrogating alternative society. The rituals and games played around the nature of performing and performances, the vulnerability of identity and so on, are sophisticated and dramatically valid. They are not less so for my feeling that the polemical points made through them have the glibness and over-simplification one has come to expect from underground philosophers when they make large statements about the fundamental shortcomings of the square world, and what form a revolutionary life-style to replace it might take.

Of course, there is more to *Performance* than this; and whether it contributes ultimately to a greater depth or is merely the piling up of rhetorical impasto on the film's

already overloaded surface is a matter of personal taste and judgment. Rising above, or lurking beneath, the psychological, sociological and political statements that constitute the movie's central drift, is a mystical or metaphysical thrust that seeks to translate us to another plane of speculation. This is partly connected with the shared violence of the two 'performers' and the similarities rather than the contrasts between their two worlds. In Chas' drugged fantasy, Turner takes over from Harry Flowers as gang boss and leads his henchmen in a wild debauch that resembles one of Francis Bacon's sado-masochistic homosexual paintings of the Sixties. This is a less benign variation on an earlier motif, that poses a relationship between the gymnasium atmosphere of Flowers' world, with its male physique magazines and studied pugilistic portraits that adorn the gang boss's walls, and Peter Blake's coyly elegant paintings of all-in wrestlers that are pinned up among the pop posters of Chas' basement hideout.

Rather less dramatically, Turner reads a resonant passage from some early account (possibly Marco Polo's) of the mediaeval, middle-eastern assassin cult led by the Old Man of the Mountains, and his dedicated, drug-crazed followers with their dream of paradise. And he infers significant parallels between that vexatious, controversial cult and, on the one hand, Harry Flowers' gang, and on the other (perhaps prophetically), the hash-smoking underground of today with their search for a new ecstatic order.

Even more striking than this is the use made of the septuagenarian Argentinian author Jorge Luis Borges, in whose stories the gangster figures as a kind of tragic or epic hero. In view of the importance that Rosg and Cammell so obviously attach to his work I find it odd that no reviewers have thought it necessary to comment on it—even in a quizzical or querulous way. Borges' writings are certainly more flaunted in *Performance* than Céline's *Death on the Instalment Plan* in *Une Femme Mariée* or Hermann Broch's *The Sleepwalkers* in *La Notte*.

The first intimation of Borges' illuminating presence appears in the first half-hour when—rather oddly one might feel—the cool gangster Rosebloom (Stanley Meadows in excellent form) is sitting in a car reading Borges' *Personal Anthology*, while Chas puts 'the frighteners' on a blue-movie exhibitor—a foreigner incidentally whom our gangster views with predictable xenophobic disdain and who in turn appeals ironically to some vague notion of 'British justice'. Borges surfaces again when Turner begins to perceive the use he might make of Chas, and in a wild peroration invokes Borges' *Tlön, Uqbar and Orbis Tertius*, a strange tale that proceeds from the discovery of a single copy of a pirated encyclopaedia containing the description of a non-existent middle-eastern country, to the further revelation that a 300-year-old conspiracy of idealist intellectuals has been working on the invention of a new and totally consistent planet. In Borges' world dreams can become reality and reality become a dream, systems of rational speculation can lead to a nightmare demonstration that life is like a labyrinth, both carefully ordered and meaningless.



Anita Pallenberg, James Fox and Mick Jagger

Next Turner switches to a tale that represents another, complementary side of Borges and quotes from the penultimate paragraph of *The South*, a tale of cool, existential horror, about a different kind of epiphanous experience, in which a German Argentinian recovers his identity in the act of taking on a challenge—as arbitrary as it is inexorable—to join a knife fight that will end in his own death. The film refers twice more to Borges. We see a copy of *Personal Anthology* again in the cut between Rosebloom's discovery of Chas' hiding place and a scene confirming that the fugitive has become part of the Turner ménage. The final one comes when Borges' portrait briefly fills the screen following a close-up of the bullet from Chas' pistol entering Turner's head.

To what extent this latter gesture is a mere act of homage one cannot be sure.

Maybe the two stories quoted—which are incidentally the first and last pieces in the English edition of *Ficciones*—are intended to define and enlarge the relationship between Chas and Turner and to take us spiralling away from the singer's Notting Hill pad. And the portrait following the murder is thus intended to suggest that in the moment of decision and death Chas and Turner have become one in the Borgesian universe. Whether this comes off is another matter. In following up these references the critic might profitably recall another Borges story, *Death and the Compass*, where a master detective is lured to his death by a master criminal, who lays a trail of wild clues in the correct belief that only his hated quarry, the detective, could make a meaningful pattern out of them, and thus arrive at the prescribed place at the right moment in time to be executed.

Chas Devlin among the posters in his basement hideout



Trevelyan's Social History

Some notes and a chronology

David Robinson

Early in December 1970 John Trevelyan announced his intention of retiring from his appointment as Secretary of the British Board of Film Censors. He was eager to refute suggestions in the popular press that it was the march of screen sex that had routed him ('Censor Quits Sex Jungle'). 'I am resigning because I think the Board needs a younger man, and anyway I want to get out before I am too old to do other things. It is also true that I enjoy my job less than I did, because I seem to see fewer good films than I used to. As to the increase of sex films, the press asked me if I liked them myself; and I had to say that I did not. But that is not a decisive factor in my decision.'

Even the most committed opponents of censorship cannot but regret Trevelyan's going. Joseph Losey has said, for instance: 'I have everything against censorship. I don't think anybody should ever be in the position of being censor except the law. I think that as a censor in this country John has been a very beneficial influence and a very informed, knowledgeable and appreciative influence. And he has helped me in many pictures. I don't mean that I go to him to find out how to make them, but he helps to make it possible and he knows far more about film-making than 99 per cent of the producers I deal with, and far more about film-making than 150 per cent of the distributors I deal with. But because of all this his office has come to have a power which I shudder to think might be inherited by a lesser person. If there has to be censorship I can think of no better person to be the censor. But I hope there will never be another censor because I think it will be worse after he leaves than before.'

Trevelyan himself has often said that the very fact that the BBFC continues in existence in 1971 is a tribute to its ability to adapt to the climate of the time. Perhaps it is rather a tribute to his own genius for public relations. Through thirteen years of bewilderingly rapid change in taste and standards, he has succeeded in balancing the interests of the industry, the film-makers, the public, the local authorities and the state. He is always prepared to share men-of-the-world-together confidences with the critics about the rationale behind any decision. He can win over a university audience in a moment by saying that of course the Board's decisions are not concerned with positively immoral audiences such as they represent. Women's organisations he disarms by telling them he can see they are mature people who will prefer him to call a spade a spade (and what pretty hats they are wearing).

Beneath the velvet manners of this tall, stooping, witty, irresistibly friendly man, is an iron hand, too. For thirteen years he has effectively defended the Board's existence by wielding the thinly veiled threat that

worse (i.e. legislative censorship) could follow the disbanding of the Board. He was already using the argument within a month of joining it, in 1958, when J. Lee Thompson had suggested that there should be a panel of film critics to hear appeals from the Board: 'There are already indications,' Trevelyan warned, 'that suggestions of this kind, if pressed strongly, might lead to state censorship...' The force of the threat is even more questionable now than it was then; but Trevelyan is still inclined to use it.

To an extent the brilliance of Trevelyan's own work at the BBFC has been a beautiful conjuring trick, dazzling enough to distract us, most of the time at least, from the essential anomaly of the Board, its peculiar division of function between censorship and classification, its uncertainty between protection of minors and moral guardianship of adults. Previous censors shunned publicity, thus adding an air of secrecy to the already mistrusted activities of the Board. Trevelyan revels in the limelight, has publicly defended the Board's work before a packed Royal

Festival Hall, is always available and articulate and informative; and almost persuades you that the Board has today no secrets.

Thanks to Trevelyan then, the Board today presents a very different image from when he took over in 1958. Generally speaking it was at that time an object of widespread ridicule and mistrust. People were never tired of recalling how the Board had banned Herbert Wilcox's innocuous *Dawn* (at Foreign Office insistence), and refused certificates to all the great Soviet silent films as well as to pacifist and anti-Nazi films in the Thirties. In 1937 they had grudgingly given a certificate to *Green Pastures*, though the then President, Lord Tyrrell of Avon, had said that it would be 'undesirable for a wave of this type of film to be produced in America.' The following year they were much exercised over *Snow White*. In more recent times the Board had rejected Autant-Lara's *L'Auberge Rouge* and Benedek's *The Wild One* and asked for cuts in *Time in the Sun*. The Secretary, Arthur Watkins, could, however, congratulate himself that the Board had been able to pass, thanks to the introduction of the 'X' certificate, such controversial films as *La Ronde*, *Baby Doll* and *Le Plaisir*.

Even so the 'X' certificate had not proved a success. It had been introduced in 1951, following a recommendation of the Departmental Committee on Children and the Cinema (on which John Trevelyan had served). Mr. Watkins said at that time that 'grown up cinemagoers are having their intelligence sacrificed for the sake of the youngsters, whom we cannot keep out.' The 'X' would 'enable us to pass unquestionably adult films.' But by the mid-Fifties, the 'X' had been brought into disrepute by being extensively exploited by less reputable exhibitors as a promise of salacious content. 'Unfortunately,' wrote John Nichols, a former Foreign Office official who succeeded Arthur Watkins as Secretary in January 1957, 'the opportunity has been seized in some irresponsible quarters to exploit the new category for less desirable films with all the harmful advertising... which the Board... deplores as tending to give the 'X' category an undeservedly bad name.'

The Nichols regime itself was not a success

either. The trade deplored his approach as 'too artistic'; while the most memorable cause of his term of office was the debate about whether the word 'seduce' must be excised from *Lucky Jim* if it were to receive a 'U' rating. Trevelyan inherited a Board under severe criticism.

1958 When Trevelyan became Secretary, things were already happening to change the climate of opinion which it was the BBFC's office to gauge and reflect. The United States Production Code had recently been amended for the first time in years, and though 'open-mouthed kissing' (which admittedly, put like that, sounds unaesthetic if not downright disgusting) was still not approved, there were a number of small but significant relaxations. The prosecution of Theatre Workshop by the Lord Chamberlain's office, on account of the introduction of improvised (and therefore uncensored) matter into a play, led to the formation of a forceful Theatre Censorship Reform Committee, which only ceased its pressure after promises of reform which were ultimately to result in the abolition of theatrical censorship.

In *Films and Filming*, J. Lee Thompson, then at the height of his prestige as an ace commercial director, attacked the BBFC for 'aspects of the application of censorship which I believe are harmful to the best interests of the British cinema and which in no way "protect" public morals.' His principal complaints were that the censors made no allowance for the freedom enjoyed by television and the competition this presented to the cinema; that the BBFC favoured American product; that Board decisions were inconsistent, so that 'censorship has become a matter more of luck than judgment.'

Thompson's reference to television was especially significant when TV drama as well as documentary was becoming more and more outspoken; it seemed anomalous, for instance, that *Death of a Salesman*, performed in full on television, was only exhibited in the cinema in the dreaded 'X' category.

Trevelyan's reply to J. Lee Thompson was one of the earliest of his many statements of policy: 'The Board's policy is always changing, slowly and perhaps imperceptibly, as public opinion changes in much the same way... In general... the Board has to reflect intelligent public opinion, so far as it can be judged, and has to avoid the showing on cinema screens of anything that may do positive harm, especially to children and young people, and anything that might be likely to offend and disgust reasonable people.' Under Trevelyan the protection of children remained a major concern of the Board, though notions like 'offend and disgust' tended more and more to be dropped.

Trevelyan still regards the granting of an 'X' certificate to *Room at the Top* at the end of 1958 as the major breakthrough of the period. Apart from everything else, it was the first time a British film that was both a critical and a commercial success had gone out with an 'X'; and from that moment the category began to acquire respectability, even though the big circuits were to hold out against it for a few years longer.

The year saw the height of the craze for nudist films; and though most of them were of staggering chasteness, it was an early indication of the desire of a considerable section of the British public for more explicit sexuality on the screen. The Board's newly liberal attitude to the nudist films was perhaps largely enforced by the growing number of successful appeals for local authority certificates. (It is interesting to note, however, that as late as 1963 the Joint Censorship Committee of the Poster Advertising Industry imposed a ban on the use of the word 'nude' on cinema advertisements.)

The year also saw discussion of the use of subliminal effects in films. Mr. Trevelyan told an enquirer that he was still a little baffled what the Board could do about this—particularly if there were such subliminal flashes as 'Give it a 'U'!'

1959 The Obscene Publications Act (1959) was further indication of a climate of increasing liberalism. *Look Back in Anger* followed close on *Room at the Top*; and although the Board was generally congratulated on the earlier decision, there was criticism from some M.P.s of the 'dirty' talk and gags in Tony Richardson's film. 'X' certificates were granted to the 1932 *Island of Lost Souls*, to *Serious Charge* (the Board's first real acknowledgment of homosexuality), to *The Savage Eye*, *Hiroshima mon Amour* and *Les Amants*. This last film was reckoned to contain 'the most frank love scenes ever'; and, faced for the first time with the suggestion of cannibalism on the screen, the Board felt obliged to prune somewhat. 'Today,' says Mr. Trevelyan, 'we would certainly pass it uncut.'

Not that the Board was anything like out of the wood. Mr. Trevelyan was still forced to admit that the 'X' certificate has acquired a disastrous reputation. There was widespread criticism for the mutilation of the all-important gas chamber scenes at the end of *I Want to Live*. The Board was also attacked for its refusal to grant a certificate to *Operation Teutonic Sword* on the grounds that it defamed a living person. The critics said that this was the business of the courts, not of the censorship, and that the injured party had legal remedies (to which in fact General Speidel had recourse when the LCC passed the film for London showing).

1960, which saw the Trial of Lady Chatterley, was one of the most eventful years in the history of British censorship. The Board suffered some of its severest and most repercussive critical assaults from Derek Hill in *Encounter* and William Whitebait in the *New Statesman*. They attacked in particular the Board's record of political censorship (e.g. *Operation Teutonic Sword*), its arrogation of authority over what adult citizens should see on the screen, and the dangers of pre-censorship. The Board's role in advising on scripts before the start of production had become a controversial issue, since the warning that the finished film would be awarded an 'X' certificate had prevented production of Michael Croft's projected film of *Spare the Rod*. Other films also, it turned out, had been frustrated by the Board's advice.

Replying to a question from Mr. Stephen Swinger in the Commons, the Home

Secretary, Mr. Butler, offered dubious support for the Board: 'On the whole the non-statutory form of censorship at present exercised for the films is probably as good as we can get.'

There were more positive pressures on the Board. The formation of cinema clubs began, and the first of the Gala clubs advertised 'the adult cinema has arrived.' The slogan was perhaps premature; most of the clubs opened with *The Wild One* or *Quiet Flows the Don*, and then rapidly settled down to *Femmes de Paris*, *I Spit on your Grave* and *Camp of Violence*. The Compton opened with *Private Property*. John Trevelyan expressed support of the club movement, but added that he was 'watching the development very closely.' Clearly the existence of clubs where anyone over a certain age limit could see totally uncensored films on payment of a nominal membership fee made nonsense of the continuing censorship of films for adults.

Eighteen months earlier Trevelyan had said, 'In our circles we can talk about homosexuality, but the general public is embarrassed by the subject, so until it becomes a subject that can be mentioned without offence it will be banned.' By 1960 things had already changed: *Oscar Wilde*, *The Trials of Oscar Wilde* and *Suddenly, Last Summer* were released with 'X' certificates. Despite its continuing opposition to violence (the shower murder in *Psycho* was cut from fourteen to three stabs), the Board passed *Peeping Tom*, which appears to have been the first commercial picture sold on the strength of pejorative notices ('sadistic', 'disgusting').

At this point the 81-year-old President of the Board resigned to be replaced by 70-year-old Lord Morrison. Morrison, who died in 1965, and was in turn replaced by Lord Harlech, the present President, made few statements about films. One of them related to *The World of Suzie Wong*, in 1962: 'Now there was a very beautiful film. There was some prostitution in it, but it didn't protrude itself.'

1961 A flood of new wave films from France resulted in a tacit lapse of the Board's traditional ban on unpunished adultery. *La Notte* was slightly cut; though from about this time we can date Trevelyan's growing insistence that 'when you're dealing with people of quality and integrity and artists there is practically nothing they can't do because they do it for valid reasons, total justification...' Trevelyan has often subsequently had to defend this introduction of aesthetic criteria into censorship. The fact that most films by Losey, Antonioni and many other 'prestige' directors have remained uncut since this date is, however, possibly due more to pre-production script discussions with Trevelyan—an aspect of his work which he regards as one of the most important developments of his term of office.

1962 'X' certificates were awarded to *Fires on the Plain* (cannibalism), *The Chapman Report* (with cuts which Claire Bloom said made the film look much dirtier), *Viridiana*, *Lolita* (no cuts since Trevelyan had given advice at script stage), *The L-Shaped Room* and *Dr. No* ('I think nowadays I regret most of all the Bond films, and the values they

represented'). It was a bumper time for homosexuality: after *Victim* (1961) came *Diferente*, *Time of Desire*, *Latin Lovers*, *Advise and Consent*, *Taste of Honey*, *The Loudest Whisper*, *The Third Sex* (which had been refused a certificate in 1959) and, in the London Film Festival, *Il Mare* (granted an 'X' certificate in 1964).

1963 Mr John Davis was still attacking the 'X' trend, though he might have been reassured by Mr. Trevelyan's erroneous guess that they 'have reached saturation point... and are on the wane.' *Freaks* (1932) and Vilgot Sjöman's *The Mistress* both received 'X' certificates.

1964 The Obscene Publications Act of 1964 threatened the possibility of reaction. Ingmar Bergman's *The Silence* was passed with an 'X' and no cuts. This was a little misleading: Mr. Trevelyan had previously visited Bergman in Sweden and indicated certain emendations which the director made before the film was sent to Britain. Sjöman's 491 was rejected by the Board.

1965 John Trevelyan told SIGHT AND SOUND's 'Arkadin' that he conceived it 'as one of the duties of the Board at present to avoid censure in any form, and for that matter to avoid praise.' ('As soon as we are praised anywhere in the press for our intelligence in letting something through uncut, some local authority somewhere thinks "Aha, so they're passing dirty films now; we'll have a look at that," and then the harm is done.') On this occasion Mr. Trevelyan said, again rather hastily as things turned out, 'The British people do not like dirty films, and they will never prosper.'

Like it or not, profoundly more liberal attitudes were forced on the Board when the GLC came into being. One of its earliest moves was to revise the prohibition, dating from 1915, on a film 'likely to be injurious to morality or to encourage or incite to crime, or to lead to disorder, or to be in any way offensive in the circumstances to public feeling or which contains any offensive representation of a living person.' A revised ruling forbids the exhibition of any film 'which is likely to encourage or to incite to crime, or to lead to disorder, or to stir up hatred against any section of the public in Great Britain on grounds of colour, race or ethnic or national origins, or the effect of which is, if taken as a whole, such as to tend to deprave and corrupt persons who are likely to see it.' Thus setting aside the dubious criterion of 'offensive to public feeling' and restricting censorship to matter already prohibited by common law, the new ruling becomes significant when an exhibitor or distributor appeals from a BBFC decision.

'On the surface,' wrote Dr. Neville Hunnings, 'the general working of the censorship is not altered. The BBFC will continue to operate in its old way and ban or cut films on the same principles as before. But in practice the Board is likely to amend its approach gradually under pain of seeing itself overruled by the Council if it does not restrict itself fairly carefully to the Council's new criteria. In one respect especially, the new rule may have a revolutionary effect. The wording of the prohibition against immoral films is based on the Obscene Publications Act, 1959, which introduced

the need to look at the publication as a whole. If this rule is interpreted strictly, it should mean that such films may only be either passed or banned, but not cut.' There can be no doubt that this has deeply affected subsequent attitudes of the BBFC.

The case of three films of 1965 (*Shock Corridor*, *Shock Treatment* and *Lady in a Cage*), all banned for fairly cogent reasons according to the Board's special considerations about violence, alerted people to the fact that the Board continues each year to reject outright an unspecified number of films whose titles are very rarely revealed by the Board or the distributors. Among the films awarded 'X' certificates during the year were *Repulsion* ('We kept our eyes on it during production. I like Roman.'), *Loving Couples*, *Dear John*, *Woman of the Dunes*.

1966 Whilst censorship seemed to be becoming stricter in some countries—France, Italy, U.S.S.R., Australia—in North America, Scandinavia and Holland there were marked signs of rapid relaxation.

1967 The GLC gave an 'X' certificate to *Ulysses* (passed by the BBFC in 1970). The Board gave 'X' certificates to *Belle de Jour*, *Poor Cow*, *Bonnie and Clyde*; but rejected *Trans-Europe Express* (sadism), *The Wild Angels* (youth violence) and *The Trip* (drug-taking). *Blow-Up* was untouched, despite scenes of sexual horseplay and the British cinema's first sight of a British star's unclad bosom.

1968 Theatre censorship was abolished. In March Mr. Trevelyan attended a press showing of *Hugs and Kisses* to explain why he had asked for the removal of a brief shot showing the heroine's pubic hair. Reactions having been gauged by this means, pubic hair was visible a few weeks later in *Helga* (which began the flood of 'sex-instruction' films) and *Girl on a Motorcycle*. Nudity was notable in *Romeo and Juliet*, *Reflections in a Golden Eye* and *If...*, though according to Mr. Trevelyan, Lindsay Anderson voluntarily removed scenes of male full frontal nudity after the sensationalist publicity given them by a section of the popular press.

The Board's unaccountable severity with *The Switchboard Operator* inspired Derek Hill's permanent 'Forbidden Film Festival', dedicated to films rejected in whole or part by the BBFC. The Board's distaste for violence resulted in heavy cutting of Michael Reeves' last film, *The Witchfinder General*, though the dubious *Twisted Nerve* (scripted by Leo Marks, the writer of *Peeping Tom*) appeared practically unscathed. After fifteen years *The Wild One* was granted a BBFC 'X' certificate.

1969 In July, Denmark abolished censorship for adults, while Sweden so far relaxed censorship as to permit restoration of cut scenes in *They Call Us Misfits*. Sweden, however, continued to ban totally *Peeping Tom* and *The Mercenaries* and to restrict *The Wild Angels* to adult audiences.

At home *The Killing of Sister George* (lesbianism) was passed by the GLC but not the Board, who also cut a scene from *Rosemary's Baby*. Ken Russell's *Women in Love* introduced unabashed male frontal

nudity, which the distributors unashamedly used to sell the film. Other films of the censor's year were *Candy*, *The Queen* (transvestism), *The Sergeant* (homosexuality in the American army), *Baby Love*, *Pigsty*, *Staircase*, *The Virgin Soldiers*, *Easy Rider*, *Midnight Cowboy*, *Therese and Isabelle* (lesbianism).

The possibility of censorship from other quarters than the BBFC was hinted when W. H. Smith refused to stock an issue of *Playboy* containing stills of films freely shown in the U.S.A. and (mostly) in Britain; while the Rank Laboratories refused to process a film by Bob Godfrey in which the Queen was made to appear to sing 'Good Evening, Friends!'

1970 The film trade in Britain, threatened by large-scale crisis, freely acknowledged 'Sexploitation' as the one road—however temporary it might prove—to salvation. Mr. Trevelyan gave an interview for a special Pornography issue of *Today's Cinema* which called 'Sexploitation' a 'licence to print money'; while the assistant managing director of the ABC circuit which so recently had rejected 'X' films said, 'If we put on sex films the takings go up 10 to 15 per cent.'

One way or another, *Zabriskie Point*, *Prologue*, *The Boys in the Band*, *M*A*S*H*, *Woodstock*, *The Strawberry Statement*, *A Married Couple*, *Fellini Satyricon* broke down a whole lot of barriers. The word 'fuck' became current on the screen. *Tropic of Cancer*, however, had still to be content with a GLC 'X' certificate.

In February, when the Tottenham Court Road police made a clumsy raid on the Open Space Theatre, removing the print of *Flesh* along with the projector and the theatre records, John Trevelyan—in perhaps the finest hour of his thirteen years in office—was on the scene within minutes, energetically to defend the film and the theatre's right to show it.

The Board's new classification scheme raised the minimum age for admission to an 'X' rated film to 18, introduced an 'AA' classification permitting the admission of children of not less than fourteen years, whether accompanied or not, and retained the 'A' certificate as a warning to parents that a film will contain material they might prefer their children not to see.

1971 With *Flesh* granted a BBFC 'X' certificate and 'permissiveness' declining sharply to smut with *Percy and The Statue*, we are left waiting for John Trevelyan's successor (for there is to be one) and wondering what his function will be. Trevelyan himself 'would like to think the role of censor is beginning to disappear; but I don't think it is.' He feels that freedom of sexual expression now presents few dangers; and sees the Board's main continuing work in five fields: the protection of children and of the mentally sick; prevention of matter likely to encourage social violence, or offering direct risks to society (he instances, in another field, *The Anarchist Cook Book*), or of matter likely to encourage drug addiction.

'One has come to realise,' he says, 'that in the interests of society as a whole the individual has to give up some expressions of individual freedom. The important thing is that he shouldn't have to give up too many, or for wrong and unworthy reasons.'



Above: Hyde on the run in Stephen Weeks' 'I, Monster'

NEW BLOOD

David Pirie

The British film industry entered 1971, if not in a state of actual crisis, at least in a kind of frenzied anxiety about the future which permeated all the levels of the business. Production during 1970 was not in fact substantially reduced, contrary to gloomy forecasts last summer, but fewer films were making money and there is something more manic than ever in the search for the correct box-office formula. A month or so ago it was sex or revolution or pop festivals; now, we may even be heading back towards straight commercial love stories, and higher budgets. But amidst all this nervous change and counter-change, the sad fact emerges that probably the most exciting British film to appear recently, *Performance*, is over two years old, and its co-director/writer Donald Cammell has scarcely worked since. And there is no need to document again Ken Loach's difficulties with *Kes* or Platts-Mills' with *Bronco Bullfrog*; it's painfully obvious that the industry is still tremendously suspicious of films with serious content.

One of the most candid accounts of the real dilemmas facing a director trying to break into British features comes from Jonathan Miller, who had what he freely admits was a catastrophic experience making *Take a Girl Like You* for Columbia. Miller's film of the Kingsley Amis novel emerged as a lumbering

and terribly old-fashioned star vehicle; after his excellent television work (not just *Alice* but *Whistle and I'll Come to You*, one of the most beautiful and underrated films sponsored by the BBC) it hardly seems a fair reflection of his abilities. Miller describes with disarming honesty the situation in which

he found himself. 'I would say that first of all my own motives were slightly at fault in accepting the project to begin with. I was thinking that . . . well, Mike Nichols can make a lot of money, why shouldn't I? I accepted the project maybe too eagerly. I think it's probably one of Amis' best novels, but there were a lot of things to be said against filming it. Then the difficulties began in double because rather than let the script happen spontaneously, the producer sat in on its manufacture at almost every stage. I'm not saying he didn't work very hard and have the best intentions; it's just that his conception and our conception of the intentions were hopelessly at odds. It's an old-fashioned story, and in an odd way George Melly and I were forced into making it even more old-fashioned by making it more sentimental. Gradually, I found myself boxed in to a very conventional, almost 1950s, studio situation, and the final cut was beyond my control. Perhaps what we were doing was something quite dishonest in trying to steal in a realistic film inside the shell of a commercial enterprise. I don't think the two can be done. You can't use the Trojan horse of commercialism to get the men of art into the citadel.'

Miller is of course describing the cinema's archetypal conflict, and he's a lot more honest than most directors about the confusion of motives it produces. Certainly it would be absurd, after *Whistle and I'll Come to You*, if he isn't given the chance to make another film. But in this instance—to extend the image of the wooden horse—his own



One of Stephen Weeks' location photographs for 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'



Gordon Hessler's 'Scream and Scream Again'

approach to the industry would seem to come more in the category of a head-on assault than a stealthy insinuation. The work of a director like the late Michael Reeves seems to me to prove that the industry is susceptible to infiltration, provided only that the infiltrator takes care to cover some of his tracks. In the case of the 'horror' film (whose scope is broad enough to include the fantastic, the historical and the psychological), he may only have to deliver the appropriate quota of shock effects to attain considerable freedom. And this is clearly preferable to being urged, as Miller was in all sorts of clichéd ways, to 'reflect the now generation'.

All four of the potentially interesting filmmakers discussed in this article have managed to gain a footing in the industry at its most commercial level; and they are all agreed that within certain limits the horror genre gives them the chance to follow their own ideas. At the same time, there is a general frustration with distributors, who are liable to treat such films with negligible care, cutting them

indiscriminately and rushing them out at the first opportunity. Sam Fuller, who demonstrated a real feeling for the Gothic in *Baron of Arizona*, once told me that the only thing that prevented him from making a horror movie was the contempt with which they were regarded, not by the public but by the front offices of the industry.

At 22, Stephen Weeks must be one of the youngest directors to make a commercial feature in England for a very long time. He started filming when he was 16, to communicate an obsession he had with the atmosphere of old buildings, and subsequently began making commercials interspersed with subsidised documentaries. In 1969 he made *1917*, a very ambitious short film about the First World War, which, although slightly theatrical, had some dazzling things in it. Now he has completed his first feature, an adaptation of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* called *I, Monster* (with Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing) which, he claims, will be the closest the cinema has got to Stevenson's original story. It's naturally impossible to say how it will turn out, but the sequences I saw were interestingly original, putting some emphasis on the Victorian preoccupation with drugs; and Weeks sees it as a stepping-stone to two projects he very much wants to do. The first, *Asylum*, is a ghost story which reflects his fascination with the aura surrounding old houses. The second—his particular pet project—is an adaptation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

For this, he has already completed a six-minute test sequence in colour which looks really impressive. It shows Gawain arriving at dusk at a mysterious church in which a mass is being celebrated, and his attempt to attract the attention of the chanters inside. The atmosphere is tremendously powerful, conveying the intense physicality of the situation as the knight, exhausted in his heavy armour, slams his hand against the coloured pane in a desperate effort to penetrate the spiritual aloofness of the monks. Christopher Lee and Milton Subotsky were so impressed with the sequence that they hired Weeks for *I, Monster*, and he hopes he will be able to make *Gawain* in the near future. He has already sought out and photographed all the necessary locations, and his script is full of ideas to convey the rugged imagery of the original poem. Weeks' *Gawain*, if he is allowed to make it, could be the first quintessentially 'English' film. Its violence, coupled with its simplicity and excitement, could bring in the kind of audience already nourished on Tolkien and C. S. Lewis.

Weeks feels that with *I, Monster* behind him he is in a much better position to make the films he wants to make. 'Now I've made a feature on budget, on schedule, and good quality merchandise, hopefully I'll find it easier to get finance for my next film. I think my other subjects are much more commercial. By being extraordinary they're more commercial, because people go to see films that are extraordinary. People make films like *Getting Straight* and then can't understand why they don't make money, when it's simply because they've been done before.' Weeks believes that the trouble with most fantasy films is that they're not realistic enough and don't pay enough attention to detail. But he

also thinks that budgets could be much lower, and that the restrictions the industry imposes can be good for a director. 'If someone said tomorrow that I could have all the money I wanted and all the time I wanted, I would still make *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* on £120,000 and no more, in six weeks, because that somehow is the logical thing.'

Peter Sasdy has graduated to features more conventionally, but he is still something of a new arrival. A Hungarian, he escaped to England after the uprising, and became a post-graduate in drama at Bristol University. He went into television, and after a spell on 'Probation Officer' and some plays, he directed an excellent adaptation of *Wuthering Heights* for BBC. He then worked on two of the 'Journey to the Unknown' series for Hammer (*The New People* and *Girl of My Dreams*), followed by another successful Brontë adaptation, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. 'I was very pleased that, coming from a foreign country, I was able to establish a reputation that I could do English classics in English for English audiences. With *Wuthering Heights* I found that I had arrived: this was my home now. But I think my style comes from the country of my birth. Hungary is a Gothic country, we have a Gothic history. I think it's something I learned very naturally.'

Hammer were quick to sign Sasdy for last year's *Taste the Blood of Dracula*, which he followed with *Countess Dracula*. He is now working on his third feature, *Hands of the Ripper*, about a girl who has inherited the hands of her murderous father. Probably the most striking thing about Sasdy, given the circumstances in which he is working, is the thematic consistency of his films. *Taste the Blood of Dracula* deals with the disintegration of the 19th-century family structure: under the influence of Dracula, the anti-father and anti-Christ, the children break out of their repressed Victorian sweetness and slaughter their parents. As Charles Barr has pointed out, the film is an almost precise complement to *The Railway Children*, and for once Dracula takes on exactly the symbolic role he had in Bram Stoker's late-Victorian novel: he is the great submerged force of libido arising out of the repression of Victorian society to castigate and transform it. In *Countess Dracula* Sasdy continues to look, in fairytale terms, at the interaction of the generations. An old Countess discovers that by bathing in the blood of young virgins she can restore her youth and become sexually attractive again, so she impersonates her own daughter, keeping her hidden away, and when the spell breaks, finally attempts to kill her for the blood. The film is a symbolic study of the old battenning on the young, which in its mesh of Freudian imagery closely follows on the preoccupations of *Taste the Blood of Dracula*. Sasdy's new *Hands of the Ripper* would seem to mirror the same themes of schizophrenia and repression.

'It was my idea to bring Dracula into the home,' Sasdy says. 'In fact, to bring it to our main audience's back garden, because that's where much of the action takes place. The transition in the film was very important. At the beginning the girls are meant to be very sweet, almost too sweet, bloodless in fact; at the end they are possessed, they are bloody. It's the verdict of society in a way that the young generation will punish the older

generation for their hypocrisy. Schizophrenia is fascinating because I think everybody has a little of it in them. We all want to be something other than what we are, and to show this visually through the cinema is exciting.' Refreshingly, Sasdy insists that he takes his horror films quite as seriously as his adaptations from the classics, and he is impressed with the amount of freedom he has been allowed on them. His next project is likely to be yet another film about schizophrenia, but this time in a modern psychological context.

Like Sasdy, Gordon Hessler has managed to establish himself with a very commercial company (AIP) with a series of stylish horror movies. Educated in England, he went to New York when he was 20 and started working on documentaries, two of which won awards at Edinburgh and Venice. He directed several of Hitchcock's TV shows before making his first feature, *The Woman Who Wouldn't Die*, at Shepperton in 1965. After more work in American television, he returned to England to produce Michael Reeves' *The Oblong Box*, taking over the direction when Reeves died. He went on to make *Scream and Scream Again* and *Cry of the Banshee* and is now preparing a new *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, all for AIP.

The best of Hessler's films to date is *Scream and Scream Again*, a delightfully fragmented bit of science fiction which Fritz Lang is reputed to have much admired, and which has the same kind of disorienting power as Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. The film is put together with a documentary realism which adds greatly to its effect, and the action sequences are directed with real panache. Hessler's other films are less interesting at script level, but he has an almost instantly recognisable visual style, perhaps dating from his documentary days, which gives all his films a suggestion of the surreal. His fluid camera (he works with that fine photographer John Coquillon) stalks and encircles the characters like a sadistic probe, and the result is somehow both evocative and unnerving.

On all his horror films so far, Hessler has worked with the writer Chris Wicking, a devoted cineaste and former editor whose screenwriting is heavily influenced by American cinema of the Forties and Fifties. Wicking's screenplay for *Murders in the Rue Morgue* is one of the most intriguing he has written, working up a complex interplay between imagination and reality, although inevitably it has undergone several changes in production. Another of his scripts was Seth Holt's last assignment before his death, and he has just completed an original treatment which Hessler may direct. Hessler echoes Sasdy in his conviction that making horror films is an important opportunity for the film-maker; but he also acknowledges the need to break into new areas. His personal ambition is to make a film about Cortez and the conquest of Mexico.

Like Stephen Weeks, Peter Sykes—a young Australian—has just completed his first feature. Sykes came over from university in Melbourne in 1963, trained as an editor, and then worked with Peter Brook on, among other things, *Tell Me Lies*. After this he made a series of documentaries and commercials before being asked by Max Steuer to direct *The Committee*, with Paul

Jones. The film, which had a fairly successful if controversial art house career, was top-heavy with rather pretentious theatrical dialogue, but it contained good sequences and was put together with some flair. On the strength of it, Albert Fennell and Bryan Clemens asked Sykes to do a couple of episodes for 'The Avengers', one of which was the exceptional *Noon Doomsday*, a semi-improvised Western that attracted a lot of attention. Sykes was all set to make a high-budget war film called *The Rules of War*, but it fell through at the last moment. 'I had to make a decision between that and *Venom* (the film he has just completed). It was the choice between doing something that could mean recognition in the industry through working with well-known actors on a big screen war story, or doing a smaller, maybe more creative sort of film. *Venom* is more of a romantic fantasy with horror overtones. It touches on the genre I'm most interested in, which is the psychological horror story—*Cat People* and films like that. It's a kind of comic strip myth.'

The mythical-psychological plot of *Venom*, which is set on the familiar horror ground of a Bavarian forest, has obvious possibilities for a director of Sykes' stylistic confidence. And it's pertinent that he should regard a genre movie as being at least as worthwhile for the aspiring director as a prestige production. It's a paradox—easily assimilable from Hollywood in the Fifties—

which still tends to be forgotten: that a director can sometimes do far more with a stereotyped story than he can with a fully developed literary showpiece. Sykes' next project is likely to be a Chris Wicking script about lycanthropy called *Blood Will Have Blood*, and he hopes after that to film an original script he has written with David Hass. He seems to have made a convenient break into the industry with what looks on paper a promising feature—and that's not an easy transition for the director of a film as iconoclastic as *The Committee*.

Whether or not these four directors, and some others working in the subterranean zones of popular cinema, will be able to realise their full potential probably depends on the producers and the state of the industry as much as on themselves. British cinema has a sadly vast record of film-makers who have sunk without trace after one or two promising pictures. But at least it's encouraging that, in a contracting industry, new directors with varied backgrounds are getting some chance to make films; and one is hopeful that fantasy films depend too much on imagination and myth to become as stultified as some of the other formulas. Despite the continuing handicap of industry conservatism in this country, if only a few directors can emerge to continue the sort of work that Michael Reeves began, we could yet see the British cinema rejuvenated from its humblest roots. ■



Left: 'The Oblong Box'. Right: Derek Newark and Neda Arneric in 'Venom'. Below: Linda Hayden in 'Taste the Blood of Dracula'.



IN THE PICTURE



Italian TV as Super-Producer

During the weeks preceding last year's Venice Festival, when it looked as if the only important film Ernesto Laura had been able to get his hands on was the new Rosi, I was told by somebody at the RAI: 'Laura doesn't have to worry. We are going to save Venice 1970. RAI is now Italy's leading film producer, so it is only right that we should dominate this year's Mostra.'

The speaker was a typical RAI bureaucrat, so I didn't take him too seriously. As it turned out, he wasn't far wrong, even if Fellini put a spoke in the wheel by refusing to let his *Clowns* be presented as cinematic film rather than for the TV programme it was intended to be. Rossellini, whose new 'didactic' phase anyway inhibits him from distinguishing between TV and cinema, was quite happy to see his *Socrates* presented in the regular Mostra; while the third of RAI's Venice presentations, Bertolucci's *Spider's Strategy*, was accepted by everybody as a cinematic film because it was in fact conceived and produced as a film, even if it had first been shown in Italy on television (and in black and white).

RAI's sudden emergence as one of Italy's leading producers coincides with the collapse of the dream of 'Hollywood on the Tiber'. The RAI's first important effort in this field was in fact a big production made for them by Dino De Laurentiis: *The Odyssey*, an Italian-Yugoslav co-production shown on TV here in eight hour-long instalments. Franco Rossi then cut it down to a normal-length film for cinemas. As one of the best things about this *Odyssey* was its colour, the film (which was not bad at all) had box-office potential; but it was brought out in mid-August, considered the worst moment of the year for Italian cinemas, and De Laurentiis claims that he lost money on the project. Anyway, it

certainly marked the beginning of the war between Italian exhibitors and TV. Italy is one country where cinema attendances have fallen off only marginally in recent years. But it only takes an important film on TV (not to mention a song festival or a sports event) and the cinemas are empty. The case is often quoted of a recent TV showing of *Viva Zapata*, which apparently emptied cinemas in the big cities as well as the provinces.

With Fellini's *Clowns*, the war got its Hiroshima. Fellini's 'film' had indeed been conceived as a TV programme; but as usual he over-shot, and the result was enough material for a normal feature. The TV people were delighted. They announced that it would be shown on Christmas night, and the producers who had been called in by RAI to make the film wanted to bring it out in cinemas the week after. Normal cinema circuits, however, refused to show it; and although TV won the tug-of-war, in so far as the film went out on the air at Christmas, its first cinema run was at a Rome art-house. It did good business initially, exploiting the fact that it was in colour and on a bigger screen. But after a few weeks, when the 'elite' audience had seen the film, business sagged, and the cinema brought back the Buster Keaton film which had been running before *Clowns* opened.

RAI considers this an exceptional case. The reverse happened with Nelo Risi's *Diary of a Schizophrenic*, which was shown for a year in cinemas before being put on TV. Liliana Cavani's *Saint Francis*, like *The Odyssey*, was a cut version of a TV series which appeared in cinemas after its small screen showing. Bertolucci's *Spider's Strategy* was shown twice on TV in one week and is waiting for a cinema to screen it. Probably it will also go to an art-house, but being a film designed in any case for a minority audience (and one in which colour is an absolutely

essential factor), it seems to have a better chance of success than *Clowns*.

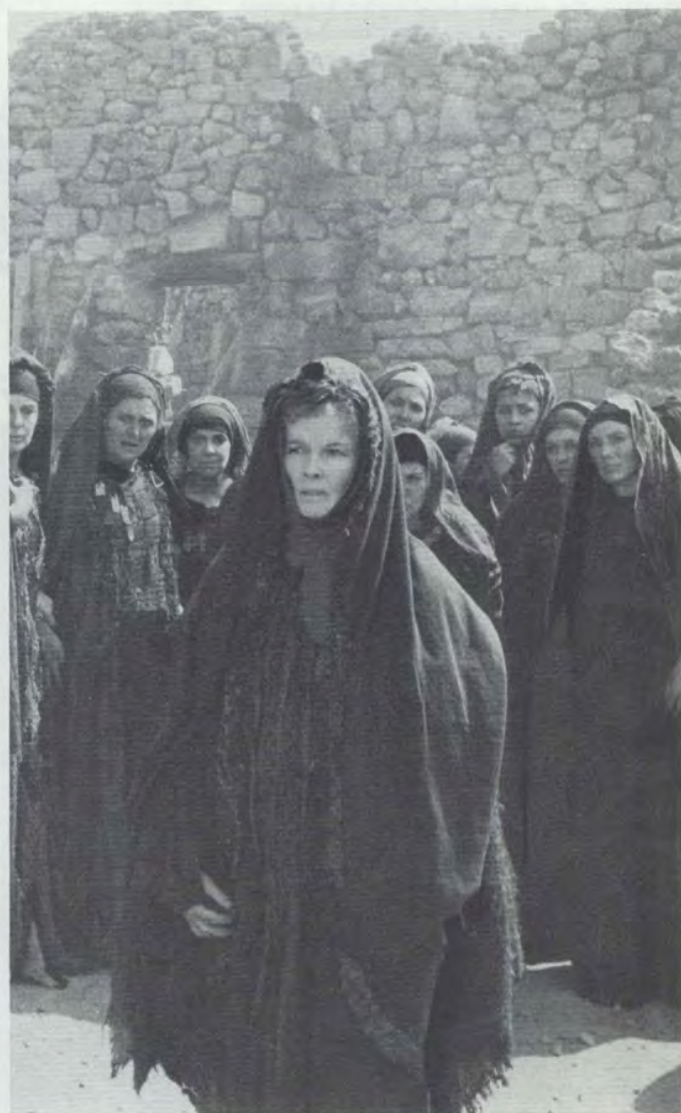
Dr. Angelo Romano, director of RAI's programming, assures me that RAI has no ambitions to compete with the film industry. He considers that the excursion into film production is a way of bringing new ideas into television. It also brings new talent, the big names of the Italian cinema who had always been scornful about working for the small screen. 'The two evenings on which *Spider's Strategy* were shown provided Bertolucci with a bigger audience than all his films have ever had in the cinema,' says Dr. Romano. (Fellini and Bertolucci, however, were in agonies because their films were seen in black and white.) Bertolucci was criticised by left-wing friends and admirers for having agreed to work for RAI, the voice of the Italian Establishment. He admitted, however, that he had no interference whatsoever from his 'producers'. (Possibly, he added, this was because RAI wanted to show how liberal it had become in recent years.)

This is perhaps the most important aspect of the RAI programme. Provided the film keeps to its budget and its script (which has of course been okayed by RAI's

censors), there is no interference. Otherwise, the films are made exactly like ordinary features. There are no different union regulations; and if cameramen, for example, are paid less in TV than in the film industry, the rule doesn't apply with directors like Bertolucci and Fellini, who pick their collaborators as they would for any production. Dr. Romano says that there can be considerable saving because TV doesn't need big names in the cast. His point is somewhat disproved, however, by the six-part series in which Anna Magnani had as her leading men the top Italian male stars, from Mastroianni to the Neapolitan pop idol Massimo Ranieri. As a matter of fact, RAI should do rather well out of this series: the Mastroianni episode is a feature in itself, with an eye on the international market if the Italian exhibitors are still holding out against screening films already shown on TV.

1971 will see two new colossals, produced for television but destined for cinema distribution in shortened versions: Franco Rossi's *Aeneid*, and Renato Castellani's *Leonardo da Vinci*, with Philippe Leroy playing the artist 'from twenty to eighty'. Each of these will be given from eight to ten instalments on Sunday nights, with

Hepburn as Hecuba in Michael Cacoyannis' film of 'The Trojan Women'





Laurent Terzieff in Susan Sontag's new film 'Brother Carl', made in Sweden, in English. The cast includes Gummel Lindblom, Geneviève Page and (with Terzieff, below) Keve Hjelm

repetition likely in 1972 when colour television finally arrives; and the films will also be seen in cinemas—though probably again in the off season. RAI will not say how much these pictures have cost, but although the sum is certainly very high in TV budget terms, it will be low in comparison to current film industry possibilities. In these two cases, I gather that the actors have in fact been receiving salaries on a TV scale. As yet, the Italian actors' union has not succeeded in negotiating cinema rather than TV salaries for appearances in films destined for both screens. The day it does so will obviously mark the end for the RAI epic.

For the moment, RAI's participation is organised in three different ways. It may enter into co-production with a foreign TV system; chiefly with West Germany and France, but also with Yugoslavia or other Communist countries (Jancsó, for instance, is to make a new film for RAI). New Renoir and Bresson films have also had RAI's participation. Alternatively, RAI calls in a film producer and shares the commercial rights with him; or it calls in an executive producer, who is simply paid a salary like the director. In this last case, RAI meets the entire cost and 'buys' the rights from itself.

This kind of arrangement would probably be very difficult in a country like Britain, for the simple reason that Italian TV viewers (like French, German, Yugoslav, etc.) seem to have no objection to dubbed versions. Significantly enough, a big recent success on Italian TV has been a six-part Sunday night screening of a dubbed version of Bondarchuk's *War and Peace*.

JOHN FRANCIS LANE

Inactive Properties

When M-G-M cleared out their stores last May and sold off the accumulated junk of fifty years, the auctioneers advertised it all as 'Countless Treasures'. More modestly, the 20th Century-Fox auction in February was described by Sotheby-Parke-Bernet, L.A., as 'Movie Memorabilia: Inactive Properties.' It was a much smaller affair, only 868 lots against M-G-M's 20,000 or so; and for the most part at least it was not really so classy. True there were a dozen actual, airworthy planes and twice as many giant model ships which had survived the battles of *Tora! Tora! Tora!*; but there were no costumes, none of those evocative remnants, homely substance of enchanted shadows, like Garbo's dresses and Garland's ruby dancing shoes.

With M-G-M the bulk was so immense that it seemed to support the old legends of production buyers scouring the antique shops of Europe to furnish a film; and afterwards throwing it all into stores already piled so high that it was easier (and no doubt more fun) to go out buying all over again for the next picture. At Fox they seem to have been a shade more economical: props were handed down from film to film. One of the most-used items was the suite of German Walnut Furniture which now makes up lots 261 to 266, 'each piece with pewter inlay and with turned supports'. It was originally bought for *Romance of the Rio Grande* in 1929—an advantageous time to buy such merchandise, for the decorators were at that moment clearing out of the smartest Hollywood homes the heavy baronial furnishings that had been the vogue at the start of the Twenties.

The suite was used again for *Professional Soldier* (1935), *Suez* (1936), Mamoulian's *Blood and Sand* (1941), in which the bed bore the gored Tyrone Power, and finally in *Dragonwyck* (1946).

Even more in demand was Lot 429, a Pleyel piano in satinwood case with *vernis martin* decorations of pastoral scenes and musical trophies. Starting its movie career in *Crack Up* (1936), it was later seen in *Alexander's Ragtime Band* (1938), *Lillian Russell* (1940), Lubitsch's *Heaven Can Wait* (1943) and *Doll Face* (1945), finally landing up in *Hello, Dolly!*

This seems to have been no very great distinction: anything and everything in the Fox props department seemed liable to end up in *Hello, Dolly!*—a Victorian perambulator, an 1877 tandem tricycle, an 1840 State chariot, a fire engine from *In Old Chicago* and a London bus that had last been seen in *Cavalcade* (1933). Other

props made equally strange transitions. 'An unusual pair of Ecclesiastical Thrones' (Lot 86) went from *From the Terrace to Beyond the Valley of the Dolls*. A pair of cock fighting chairs passed from *Daddy Long Legs* to *Laura* and finally found their proper niche in *Myra Breckinridge*.

Not everything was as adaptable as chairs and bedroom suites. The sale is freely littered with debris from *Cleopatra* and *Doctor Dolittle*; and it is interesting to speculate what the lucky purchasers will do with some of the properties designed exclusively for individual films: the 6' 8" champagne glass which bedded Shirley MacLaine and Robert Mitchum in *What a Way to Go*; the 6' 2" wooden soldiers fondled by Shirley Temple in *Captain January*; and Lot 470: 'Life-size Head, severed at the neck: Bruce Dern in the role of John Mayhew. *Hush Hush Sweet Charlotte*.'

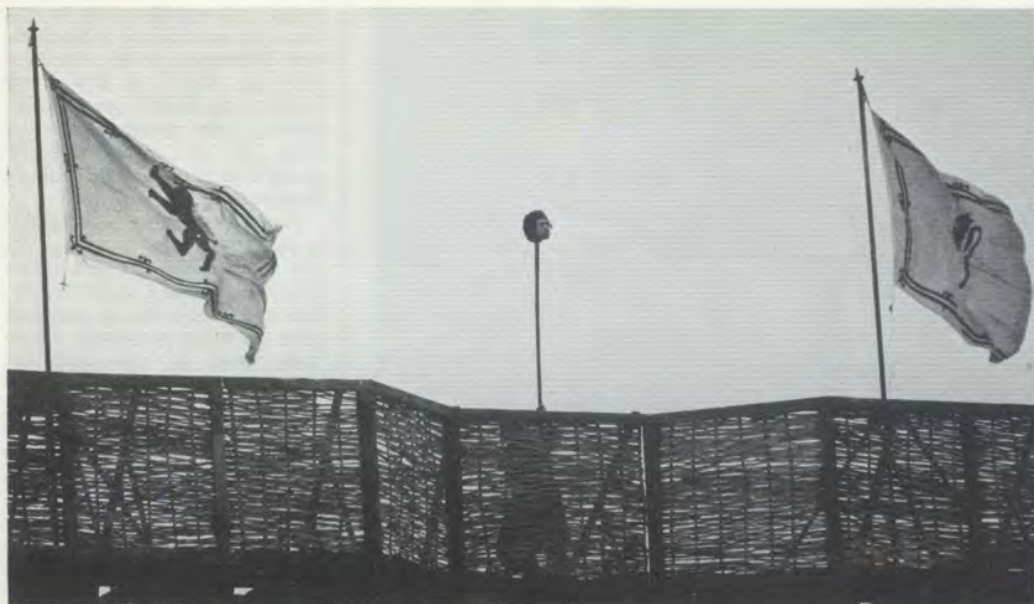
A very few lots carry authentic nostalgia: a pair of art deco tables on which the dainty hand of Oliver Hardy rested in *Great Guns*; a group of farm wagons ('poor condition') from *My Darling Clementine*; a set sketch for *Tobacco Road*. There is something to be said, as souvenirs, for Paul Newman's bicycle from *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and Julie Andrews' *Sound of Music* carpet bag. But it must have taken a very gullible enthusiast of movie memorabilia to go for Lot 358, an empty Scotch bottle allegedly used by Humphrey Bogart in *The Left Hand of God*.

DAVID ROBINSON

Polanski's Macbeth

Once affixed, labels are hard to change, as Roman Polanski and his team have discovered with his new film version of *Macbeth*. The first label that received, with maximum co-operation from the press, was 'the nude *Macbeth*'. Fair enough, to a point: the film is a *Playboy* production, made in association with Hugh Hefner, and it does include a nude sleep-walking scene for Lady Macbeth. But these two facts, as everyone is now at great pains to tell you, do not mean that





Roman Polanski's 'Macbeth'

it will be any less a serious, intellectually respectable filmed approach to Shakespeare.

The most obvious oddity about it is actually the remarkable youth of the cast. We are used to Macbeths pushing sixty, with virago wives terrorising them into action. But as Kenneth Tynan, Polanski's script collaborator, points out, there is nothing in the text to support this, and read in this way the play seems to be lacking some essential ingredient. For him, the only stage production he has seen which began to work was the old Laurence Olivier/Vivien Leigh one which assumed that both characters were relatively young and vigorous, and that the sexual attractions of Lady Macbeth played an important role. In the film the idea has been carried a bit further. Since all the play tells us about Macbeth is that he is feared as the greatest warrior in Scotland and that he is passionately ambitious, Polanski and Tynan have cast a 29-year-old, Jon Finch (previous films: *The Vampire Lovers* and *Horror of Frankenstein*), as Macbeth, and Francesca Annis as his matchingly young and attractive lady.

As Tynan puts it: 'When we first see them they are young Mr. and Mrs. Scotland, the couple most likely to succeed. Probably not long married, and obviously still powerfully physically attracted to each other. It is not a question of either dominating the other, but of a fatal interaction between them. Macbeth is ambitious, and he wants everything fast. Lady Macbeth encourages this in him, and triggers off forces that she never guessed existed. Instead of killing one, Macbeth kills three, and this is the beginning of Lady Macbeth's mental withdrawal: she gradually retreats into a state of shock, until by the end she is almost catatonic. We tested about a dozen actresses for the role, explaining our reading to them and saying "So you don't have to bellow." All of them except Francesca said yes, yes, and then merely bellowed quietly. She was the only one who played the test

scene with Macbeth as a young woman in love with her husband and confident that he loves her.'

Though Francesca Annis has had a fair grounding in Shakespeare on the stage, she had only once seen *Macbeth* (the John Clements/Margaret Johnson production) and had no very fixed ideas about it. Jon Finch has never played Shakespeare at all, and none of the other actors could be considered primarily Shakespeare players. Which is just the way Polanski and Tynan wanted it: that they should approach their parts from scratch, as roles like any other.

But all this is in the cause of Shakespeare—a stripping-off of accretions and irrelevant associations. The text used in the film retains about two-thirds of the play with some transpositions and some visual scenes necessarily added: the murder of Duncan, for instance (which Tynan maintains was left out of the play in deference to the susceptibilities of James I, who would hardly have taken kindly to the spectacle of a Scots king being butchered), and the awakening of the blood-smeared grooms. The major 'cinematic' addition is a dream sequence in the middle, embodying the various images of future events evoked by Shakespeare, but even this is regarded as authorised by the text. What else, after all, are the witches doing with that cauldron but brewing a potion for Macbeth in order that he may glimpse the future? So it seems only reasonable that he should be seen to drink it and suffer the consequences, *Rosemary's Baby*-style.

In the backgrounds and settings Polanski has, characteristically, insisted on realism. 'The action takes place at a specific time and place; people live and work in that castle; the witches are real people doing a real job, not phantoms or Fates.' The exteriors have been shot, not in Scotland ('too touristy') but in Wales and around Lindisfarne (*Cul-de-Sac* country); the interiors, designed with an eye to minute credibility by Wilfrid

Shingleton, at Shepperton. And the nude sleep-walking scene? That, insists Tynan, is realistic too: the historical Lady Macbeth would not have worn anything in bed, and the text's references to 'night-gowns' mean dressing-gowns, something you put on when you get out of bed. Indeed, Tynan adds in a mood of bold historical conjecture, Shakespeare himself would surely have approved of the nude sleep-walking and done likewise, except that the appearance of a nude boy on stage in that scene would somewhat have damaged credibility. Well of course if you need an excuse for showing Francesca Annis in the nude...

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

Tours or Detour

Tours Short Film Festival has always been the choice of the hedonistic. There were always more shorts to be seen at Oberhausen, but the Tours selection was good enough for all but the most omnivorous, and it had the added advantage of being in a nice town with nice things to eat. But, unless they change their policy, it looks as if it is going to have to be Oberhausen after all—Ruhr or no Ruhr.

Last year's Tours Festival, after a gap of a year, was not too bad; but that perhaps was because they had two years to pick from. This year was a disaster. This could be because there were fewer interesting shorts around; and this is true, I think, since young film-makers now jump right into feature film-making without the standard three or four preliminary short films. If one thinks back, Antonioni made about six shorts before his first feature; so did Resnais. Even Godard and Truffaut made a couple. But now with cheaper and lighter 16 mm. apparatus, and the dropping market for shorts, more film-makers skip the short stage.

Perhaps the time is past when short film-makers would seek out the festivals: now the festivals

need to be much more energetic in seeking them out. In line with post-1968 views, Tours is no longer competitive, and without prizes or awards there is not the same incentive for film-makers. So there were no shorts from Germany, Russia, Rumania, Africa or Sweden; nor was there anything from the American underground. This would have mattered less if the shorts that were chosen had been good. With a few, very few, exceptions, they weren't.

The eastern European goodies included two Czech cartoons (*Bedrich* and *Pojar*), and two Polish films, *Testament* and *How Long Does It Take to Forge a Horseshoe?* Despite their off-putting subjects (the first is about the concentration camps) the Polish films were both imaginative and interesting, a rare combination at Tours. There were three French fiction shorts, obviously designed to prove that their makers could be trusted with features—as so they can: Jean-Pierre Moulin (*Maid's Room*), Patrice Leconte (*Living Space*), Jean-Pierre Ghys (*The Suburban Bandit*). Also from France was the 50-minute *Le Cochon* by Jean Eustache and Jean-Michel Barjol; how a pig is killed and made into sausages—again, despite the subject matter, a fascinating work.

Finally, Britain's *Mummy*, *Mummy*, one of the hits of the Festival. Produced by the Central London Polytechnic film section and directed and written by John Beech, this was an N. F. Simpson-like burlesque of an infantile adolescent whose mother still caters to his every whim, including the bedding and bashing of any number of unfortunate young girls. Coming at the end of the last programme, it sent us all out in a much more cheerful mood than the Festival deserved.

RICHARD ROUD

Inside Performance

Donald Cammell, surrealist painter, son of an editor of *The Encyclopedia of Magic*, and supposedly godson of the legendary occultist Aleister Crowley, had his first serious brush with the studio system around six years ago. He wrote and sold a screenplay to Columbia which eventually turned into *Duffy*, with James Fox and James Coburn. Halfway through the shooting he was fired 'for independent thought'. For him the occasion was a warning of the impossibility of personal cinematic expression within a commercial framework. When the shifting pattern of movie set-ups in the late Sixties find their chronicler, the reception of *Performance* at Warner Brothers will deserve a special mention.

Performance originated in a short story Cammell wrote in 1968 about a gangster on the run in London. He took it to Mick Jagger, who had earlier been interested in making a film with him after the collapse of various Rolling Stones' movie projects; then to James Fox and Nicolas Roeg. A detailed

60-page treatment was produced which ended up at Warner Brothers.

Roeg and Cammell knew what they wanted: an imagistic experimental film exploring the voyeuristic potential of the camera, a surrealist examination of the unconscious in the tradition of their heroes Cocteau and Anger. Cammell supposes that Warners saw the treatment quite differently. Sex. Violence. Pop. Jagger. A magic formula. An *Easy Rider* ahead of its time. So Warner Brothers produced the cash—the final budget ran to just over a million dollars.

The first troubles began after ten weeks of shooting, when three-quarters of the film was completed. Cammell's version is that Warners threatened to close the movie down. They disliked the tone of the violence and cried pornography ('even the bath water is dirty'). Cammell claims that everyone on the film was genuinely unprepared for the reaction. Somehow the film was finished and a rough cut produced by February 1969. Official silence for six months, then Warners was taken over by Kinney National and there was a change of heart. Final cut and dub, early 1970.

According to Cammell, Warner Brothers Distributors then insisted upon cuts before release. Perhaps they thought that the underworld 'we're in a business' scenes were a subversive implication that capitalism is a hoodlum ethic. They insisted upon the removal of fifteen minutes from the underworld sequences, which the co-directors considered crucial to the definition of Chas. They objected to the sex. And they thought the whole film was too complex. 'Can't you make it simpler?' 'Why doesn't Jagger come in earlier?' Did they in their terms have a point?

Recutting was finished in April 1970 and the film was due to open in July. John Trevelyan asked, among some other minor points, for the removal of intercut shots of Chas' girl friend clawing his back inserted into the flogging sequence. He said he could not countenance an explicit statement of Chas' sado-masochism. Cammell pointed out that deletion of this piece of character development would make the scene gratuitously violent. This Trevelyan accepted. Then, says Cammell, Warner Brothers Distributors exercised their own censorship and removed the intercutting anyhow.

This is naturally not an impartial assessment of the rights and wrongs of the troublesome parturition of *Performance*. No doubt Warners' retort would make intriguing reading. Regard it rather as the basis for a contemporary case history of the power struggles between big studio and nonconformist director.

Although Cammell had known Roeg for years, *Performance* was their first collaboration. Cammell's skills are literary and painterly. It was he who introduced Roeg to Borges' work, he who wrote most of the dialogue, and in general he

who told the actors what to do. Roeg contributed the cinematography; his sympathetic translation of Cammell's surrealistic themes into camera set-ups and patterns of cutting would spark Cammell off on further collective tracks in this two-way exchange. Or as the posters say, 'Vice. And Versa.'

A detailed pre-written scenario was produced for the first half-hour only, for the benefit of the underworld and to help Fox ease himself into an unfamiliar role. No effort was spared to get the argot right—Cammell enlisted the co-operation of a friend of Ronnie Kray to coach Johnny Shannon, the boxing trainer from the Old Kent Road who played Harry Flowers. The rest of the film was virtually made up as they went along—a quickly rehearsed half-improvisation, then straight into shooting.

What next? Roeg's debut as a director was of course quickly followed by his excursion to Australia to make *Walkabout*. A brief preview records that it deals with two youngsters, a girl of fourteen and her brother, stranded in the outback by the suicide of their father. An aborigine rescues them, brings them back to civilisation and woos the girl. She inadvertently destroys him by her withdrawal of interest and he commits ritual suicide.

Cammell's most imminent exploit is a role in Kenneth Anger's *Lucifer*, shooting any minute in the Valley of the Kings. He hopes to make a film, provisionally titled *Ishtar* after the Babylonian goddess of love, in North Africa in the autumn—private backers, no distributors. *Ishtar* is to resume where *Performance* left off. Its central character is a documentary filmmaker, Nonus, who is shooting a reconstruction of the kidnapping of a Supreme Court judge by a derelict revolutionary. Nonus' assistant is a female superstar who gets bored with her employer and complains that the movie is morbid. *Ishtar* will be a parody, a suspense thriller, a 'movie-within-a-movie'. It will be a further delving into the imagery of the unconscious.



Severn Darden in Peter Fonda's 'The Hired Hand'. Photo: Peter Sorel

If, that is, Cammell can get the support necessary to operate outside the studio system. He certainly sees himself as debarred from working within it.

GRAHAM CADWALLADER

The B.F.I. Award, 1970

The British Film Institute Award for the 'most original and imaginative film introduced at the National Film Theatre during the year' has been made to Bernardo Bertolucci for *The Conformist*, shown during the 1970 London Festival. As Richard Roud suggests in this issue, both *The Conformist* and *The Spider's Strategy* (also seen at last year's London Festival) mark a new maturity in Bertolucci's work. The autobiographical strain of *Before the Revolution* is still there, but the private preoccupations are now confidently assimilated within the framework of the films; the artist and his work are inseparable. After the hesitant flirtation with Godard in *Partner*, Bertolucci has now struck out on his own—a film-maker who knows exactly what he wants to do, and perhaps more importantly knows

how he does it best. Extraordinarily, at the time of writing *The Conformist* still awaits a commercial unveiling in this country.

Together with the main award goes a special mention to the young Egyptian director Shadi Abdelsalam for *The Night of Counting the Years*, hailed at Venice last year as something of a revelation and also enthusiastically received at the London Festival (see John Russell Taylor's comments in the last issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND*). Abdelsalam was an art director on *Cleopatra* and *Pharaoh*. But though the most immediately striking thing about *Night of Counting the Years* is its visual richness, it can't be written off as simply an art director's film. This is a film as uniquely Egyptian (Abdelsalam creates an extraordinary and slightly unnerving sense of the living presence of the distant past) as Satyajit Ray's films are uniquely Indian. And like Ray in the 1950s, he seems to be working in a vacuum. It would be premature to hail his film as a breakthrough for the Egyptian cinema; but a director who can surface so confidently from the commercial doldrums of that country's cinema deserves all the encouragement he can get.

Buck Henry and Lynn Carlin in 'Taking Off', Milos Forman's first American picture. Photo: Charles Moore



A TERRIBLE DUTY IS BORN



In 1962, three years after he had turned his full attention from criticism to direction, Jean-Luc Godard could say, 'Instead of writing a critical essay, I make a film, and introduce a critical dimension into film itself. I consider myself an essayist.' As a critic Godard had repudiated bourgeois art and admired the B-movies of several low-brow American directors. He had liked their concentration on *mise en scène* rather than character development. They had shown him that, through editing or the composition of a shot, a director could manipulate his sets, props and characters—could create 'gimmicks', as Hitchcock says—in a way that gave his films their identifiable style. As a feature director Godard therefore began his career at the point where he had left off as a critic. There has been a methodical continuity and wholeness in his work.

Yet even in the kind of film-making he admired, there were conventions he felt he must transform to create a unique and personal *cinéma d'essai* (in both senses of that French word). Once he began making colour films Godard devised a colour scheme that he could exploit as surely as a B-Western might exploit a landscape. Wherever possible, he and Raoul Coutard shot only primary colours—a blue towel, a yellow dress, a red car—on a white background. (This is particularly noticeable in the 1963 *Le Mépris*, which happens to be about film-making.) This primary colour scheme is indicative of what Godard was trying to do in general: to reduce film-making to its fundamental, irreducible elements. At the heart of his aesthetics lies anarchy.

Godard has de-structured his films until there is no plot left in them. In *A Bout de Souffle* (1959) the editing already has an unprecedented austerity. Nine years and fifteen independent features later, he had reduced film to a form that's scarcely a dialogue, let alone a plot. *Le Gai Savoir* (1968) has only two characters: they appear only against a blacked-out set and do nothing except talk, though not necessarily to each other. The film's content, a collage of their thoughts, has a purely abstract structure. The film is an 'essay' of images in the sense that a soliloquy is an essay.

Moreover, meaning in Godard's films has tended less and less to exist, as it does in middle-brow films, in the psychological relationships between the characters. The relationship that matters in his films is the one between each character and the thoughts of the director. Godard has gone so far as to plant a miniature receiver behind the ear of an actress. That way he could interview or direct her while she was actually in front of the camera. The performance became a spontaneous attempt to compose oneself instead of a rehearsed attempt to show feeling.

This is naturalism carried to its final conclusion. The inescapable fate of the character is no longer what it was in the Hollywood gangster movie—no longer the web of circumstance in which the story involves him. The character's fate now becomes the camera itself. Godard has even made the extravagant suggestion that 'a camera filming itself in a mirror would be the ultimate movie.' It would be, in his terms, the ultimate fusion of form and content.

It's no accident that Godard's conversation is laced with admiring references to Lumière and Méliès. Godard himself has been trying to get back to a prelapsarian potential of film-making. The work of Lumière and Méliès has turned into separate alternatives that he would now make whole again. He has been after a third alternative that would reunite the other two, documentary and fantasy, but has somehow been left

behind. What that alternative promises is stated most simply by Juliette Janson, the heroine of *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (1966). 'Art,' Juliette says in the midst of a monologue, 'is the humanising of objects.'

At their best, whether low-brow or high-brow, movies have tended to be an art of objects: a perambulator rolling down steps, two forks stuck into potatoes that dance like feet, a suspicious glass of milk, a crystal paperweight with a tiny snowman inside, a black monolith. The great movie comedians have had to be jugglers, and the dramatic actors have had to be handy with a gun or a sword. But because of their fascination with objects, movies, especially the classic B-movies, have tended to be an art in which people become mere objects too. The humanity Godard would lend to such objects, inanimate and mortal alike, is his own. The camera that films itself in a mirror is in truth only the penultimate movie: in the ultimate movie it's the director who must appear in the mirror. It's his imagination that is reflected on the screen.

Two or Three Things is the culmination of this aesthetic in Godard's work. He has claimed that the 'Her' in the title refers to Paris rather than Juliette. He's said this not to clarify matters, but to introduce some ambiguity into our impression of the film. For 'Her' certainly refers to both city and heroine. The film was prompted by an article Godard read on the urban renewal of Paris, which had raised the cost of living so high that middle-class housewives were resorting to prostitution to cover family expenses. The film is therefore a documentary on Paris—on an object in a collective sense of the noun. At the same time it's a fantasy about a fictitious character. In lieu of credits Godard has Marina Vlady introduce first herself and then the character Juliette whom she plays. The fantasy is purposely acknowledged as such.

As the film progresses, however, fantasy and documentary become one. Godard had portrayed prostitutes in earlier films, and this film capitalises on those earlier treatments by making prostitution into both a

subject and a metaphor. Juliette is of course a housewife who turns to prostitution, and as a prostitute she too becomes, cinematically as well as sexually, an object. In a scene late in the film, an American customer forces Juliette and another girl to put airline flight bags over their heads. The old cliché about woman as object is made into an ironic and bitter sight gag. But while Juliette is being degraded in this way, Godard intersperses scenes from the demolition and reconstruction of Paris. In the customer's hotel room the camera sees Juliette from his point of view. But the abrupt montage, reminiscent almost of Eisenstein's, frees Godard from that point of view. And once his camera has refused to cooperate any further with the customer, so can Juliette.

Although her refusal is made without melodrama and is even a bit hopeless, we feel it isn't hers alone. She has said no to a process of dehumanisation that exists beyond her relationship with the customer. It exists in the society outside the hotel room, and it could have existed within this film that contains both her and the society. Her refusal is made on Godard's behalf, and ours. It isn't an epic gesture. Godard isn't dishonest with either the document or the fantasy. He doesn't pretend his film will alter contemporary history. He doesn't even imply Juliette's action will alter her life. Her refusal remains nothing more than one fact documented among many others—a momentary presence of human spirit.

Despite the title's suggestion that the film is a random assortment of Godard's thoughts, *Two or Three Things* consolidates much that had gone before it. Such a film makes Godard's 'critical essay' into a substantial cinematic innovation. Yet it has been difficult at times not to have misgivings about where his adventurousness would lead. In *Le Mépris* a quotation from Lumière appears on a screening-room wall: 'The cinema is an invention without a future.' It has seemed reasonable to wonder whether, once Godard has worked his way clear of the past, his own cinema might not turn out to be an invention without a future. At the same time he was filming *Two or Three Things*, he was at work on another feature, *Made in U.S.A.*, much of which is just photography of a tape-recorder playing the film's soundtrack. The only possibility left after that, one had the uneasy feeling, would be the *reductio ad absurdum* of the camera filming itself. *Le Gai Savoir* does indeed seem to render null and void all the traditional film conventions. The aesthetic anarchy could go no further, could it?

Godard has said, as if to offer a corollary to Lumière's remark, that the cinema is the art of the present. He finished *Le Gai Savoir* in early 1968 and must already have made arrangements to start *Sympathy for the Devil* (*One Plus One*) in London that June. But in the meantime he participated in the student riots and general strike in Paris. And as a result of that experience, it seems, film-making became for him a part of the historical present in a way it hadn't been before. He suddenly began to redefine his work as a political activity.

This isn't to say that politics played no part in his earlier film-making. If *Two or*

Three Things has a villain, it's capitalism. Juliette's American customer, a 'journalist' just returned from Vietnam, is little more than an embodiment of capitalist imperialism. Contemporary political issues are explicit in other Godard films, and a political consciousness is at least implicit in all of them. Michel Poiccard, in *A Bout de Souffle*, isn't just a throwback to the 1930s gangster movie: he's potentially a figure of the urban guerrilla. Godard has hardly been unaware of the significance modern theoreticians of revolution attach to such a character. According to Franz Fanon, a criminal like Poiccard is a culture hero of the revolution. According to Mao Tse-Tung, the *déclassé* elements of society—the criminals and prostitutes—are among those readily recruited into a liberation front.

In some films Godard made during the period 1965–68, capitalist society degenerates further towards self-alienation and revolution than it did in *Two or Three Things*. *Pierrot le Fou* (1965) begins with an urbane parody of bourgeois culture, and ends when its middle-class hero carries out a sapper attack in which he is his own target. *Weekend* (1967) begins in a comparable fashion, and ends with outright guerrilla warfare. Having cast a glance into the political future in his 1965 *Alphaville*, Godard was feeling an ever stronger sense of outrage at the present. In the segment he did for *Far from Vietnam* (1967), he made a prototype of that ultimate film where the director interviews himself. What he found out was that the political function of film-making had come to be uppermost in his mind.

But it wasn't until the spring of 1968 that politics began to make non-negotiable demands on Godard's conscience as a film-maker. The crisis in Paris led to a crisis in his career. *Sympathy for the Devil*, begun on schedule in June, turns out to be a transitional film. It's a confrontation between the film-maker and the newly radicalised activist. The result is really two films edited together. One is a documentary of a Rolling Stones recording session; the other is a fantasy about some black militants, a radical white girl, and a right-wing bookseller who specialises in pornography.

Godard's interest in the Stones was clearly the chance that there would be some instructive analogy between their method of

improvisation and his own. A film might attempt to synthesise its rushes the way an A and R man can 'mix' tracks in a recording. But in *Sympathy* there is no synthesis of either documentary and fantasy or politics and aesthetics. Because he had made *Two or Three Things* and *Made in U.S.A.* almost simultaneously, Godard always wanted those two films shown at the same time: first a reel of one, then a reel of the other. He must have felt that the resulting non sequiturs would be an appropriate kind of autobiographical truth. The effect of *Sympathy* is just this sort of dualism. The unity achieved in *Two or Three Things* here disintegrates.

At the end of *Sympathy*, a black militant chases the white radical down a beach and shoots her. Godard himself pops out from behind the camera to pour a bucket of stage blood on her, characteristically denying any dramatic realism and reminding us who the character's true nemesis is. The ending thus tries to resolve political problems into yet another statement about film-making. But as he peers into the camera, Godard's uncertain, embarrassed smile suggests he knows it won't work, not any more. The girl's body is loaded on to a camera boom and hoisted up in the air. Two flags are flying from the boom—a red one and a black one—as if in admission of a divided allegiance.

At the end of the two films Godard made about a year later, *See You at Mao* (or *British Sounds*; March, 1969) and *Pravda* (June, 1969), flags are raised again, but only one flag: the red one. This isn't an idle symbolic gesture. Both of these films represent a radical departure. The difference isn't that Godard has discovered any substantially new social issues to make films about. For instance in *Pravda*, which is a study of present-day Czechoslovakia, he's made a critique of the proletariat. This is something he had done before in *Les Carabiniers*, his 1963 film about two men inducted to fight in a hypothetical world war. But the earlier film is, as Godard has said, an implicit attack on socialism. It interprets the necessary pre-condition for the socialist state as a form of literal-mindedness, a failure of the imagination. It's an artist's commentary on politics. *Pravda* is a political commentary. Its attack is made not on socialism but on revisionism.

Among Godard's earlier films, *La Chinoise*

(1967) is closest to his new interests. *Mao* is a report on the prospects for uniting students and workers in a common struggle. As such, it updates Godard's treatment of New Left student radicalism in *La Chinoise*. After much ideological haggling, the students in *La Chinoise* are finally determined to act: they will assassinate someone. But as usual Godard reserved for himself the right to settle the arguments raised by his characters, and to spoil their prospects of a heroic role in either history or cinema. The students assassinate the wrong man. Their attempt to take decisive action is allowed to be only further inaction. The camera stares blankly at the façade of the hotel behind which their bungling is hidden from our view. Our only evidence of it is on the soundtrack, where they discuss their confusion and admit their mistake. The assassination is, in effect, just more of their endless debating. The film is a 'critical' essay on rhetoric. It is Godard's action programme, his aesthetic anarchism, that has won out in the end.

Now *Pravda* and *See You at Mao* have embraced the same rhetoric that's ridiculed in *La Chinoise*. They have translated Godard's aesthetics directly into that rhetoric. They confirm what he said in a *New York Times* interview last year: that he repudiates on political grounds most past film-making, including his own. For him the day he began shooting *Mao* was the first of Vendémiaire in the Revolutionary Year One. The increasing politicisation of his films makes this an understandable development, perhaps even a predictable one. It's easy to say with hindsight that this revolution had been coming for quite a while. Nevertheless, it seems to have purged Godard of certain emotions that were before important in his career as a film-maker. Translated directly into political terms, his aesthetics begin to look a bit totalitarian. In the name of a new social order they betray the cinematic principles they were created for.

In *Mao* and *Pravda* human beings again revert to the cinematic status of objects. Godard's earlier career gave women as compassionate a treatment as they've had on the screen, especially from a man. Although he made *Une Femme Mariée* in 1964, long before Women's Liberation, the film is an eloquent and affecting apology for that movement. In *See You at Mao* a long portion of the track is again devoted to talking about the oppression and exploitation of women. But the accompanying sequence on the screen is of a nude girl walking up and down some stairs. If the intention here is satirical, the satire is counter-productive. The mock pornography makes a rather trite joke out of the real political issue at stake. In *Pravda* general intentions are still less ambiguous. Czech workers are put on the screen only to be condemned for not having the correct political attitude. Both films suffer from all the excesses of a righteous enthusiasm for ideology.

Even so, the two films aren't a complete break with Godard's past. They have a recognisable Godard style. They also have continuity with earlier work because they go beyond *Le Gai Savoir* in eliminating traditional narrative elements. Whereas *Le Gai Savoir* does away with everything except a couple of central characters, these films do without the characters as well. Such intermediaries between Godard's imagination

'Wind from the East': Godard and company



and ours are no longer needed. Documentary and fantasy don't have to be superimposed on each other or interspersed. While almost every sequence in these films is documentary footage, the total document represents the fantasy. Document and fantasy are merged, or rather submerged, in the ideological myth of history. The ideal union of the two is now agit-prop.

But where *See You at Mao* and *Pravda* fail as humanist art, they also fail as propaganda. They rely on the most trying techniques of propaganda, and sacrifice those things that make propaganda effective in reaching a mass audience. In an effort to be didactic, both films are monotonously repetitive. Certain shots or scenes—a Czech making an anti-aircraft gun for the North Vietnamese, a fist punching a hole in a paper Union Jack—punctuate and repunctuate each film. The cinematic image strains to become a slogan in the mouth of a polemicist. Yet the films remain obscure and eclectic. Godard has refused to discipline himself to the kind of simple themes that can sometimes, as in Riefenstahl's epics, make propaganda film powerful. Although he said in the *Times* interview that he is ready to give up film-making altogether, this doesn't appear to mean he's equally ready to put his talents at the disposal of the revolution.

When *See You at Mao* (then called *British Sounds*) was discussed on LWT's programme *Aquarius*, the most virulent attacks on it came from radical young workers. They considered it an insulting form of decadence and obfuscation. They're not going to be in any audience Godard can reach. Who might be in that audience is a problem. Having begun his career by turning against bourgeois art, he has now turned against the bourgeoisie itself. Godard knows well that, in his own words, 'Cinema is the same all over. It belongs to the bourgeoisie, to the bourgeois mentality.' The bourgeois intellectual who has gone to Godard's films has always been hypocrite enough to admire art that reviles the life he himself lives. Perhaps he'll continue to enjoy this hypocrisy, even if Godard no longer does. Or perhaps he won't.

No one would have a better right to be disappointed with Godard's denunciation of his past work than Henri Langlois. As founder of the Cinémathèque, Langlois might be considered the original mentor of Godard, and indeed of the entire New Wave. Yet he isn't disappointed at all, so maybe the rest of us should at least reserve judgment. 'Godard has become like St. Paul,' Langlois said in a recent interview, 'and he is not the same man who made films. He is making something else now and I like it very much. People say that he is on the road to suicide but it is not true.' When asked whether that meant Godard had been on the road to suicide before, Langlois added, 'Yes, and now he is showing how the professional filmmaker can avoid compromise.'

If Godard's cinema truly was an invention without a future, Langlois may be right. Instead of sacrificing his career as a director, it may be Godard has found a way to save that career and revitalise it. *Wind from the East* points towards a possible salvation. Whether the film is a new advance remains to be seen. It seems more appropriate to say

for now that it's a hopeful and uncompromised step backward—back from the brink of a future where the cinema would have no place.

Over a decade ago Godard told an interviewer, 'I would... like to use a conventional plot as a point of departure and then remake, but in a completely different way, all cinema that has already been made.' These remarks were made with reference to *A Bout de Souffle*; but they might just as accurately have been made about *Wind from the East*, because Godard has done very much the same thing in it. He has gone back and begun again, not with a gangster movie this time but with a Western. Godard uses his Western as a parable on imperialism. A cavalry officer is trying to transport a captured Indian, and the Indian rebels against his oppressor. The characters in this plot are frontier types who correspond to the characters that populated many Godard films of the 1960s. The Indian is of course another version of the criminal—a version closer than his predecessors to Franz Fanon's model. The entourage with the cavalry officer even contains a prostitute.

If this were all there were to *Wind from the East*, it would be a lot like *A Bout de Souffle*—a little too like it, only not as good. But the Western is just the core of the film. What surrounds it is a radical exegesis of its content. The actors are interviewed about their roles or the function of bourgeois art. Characters extraneous to the Western plot appear from time to time. And anecdotes from the history of revolution and the general strike are brought in through a voice-over narration. The result is on occasion hopelessly abstract, as when two sections of the film are entitled 'The A Theory' and 'The B Theory'. But leaving aside the question of cinematic delivery, the film is definitely an advance in Godard's intellectual commitment to politics.

Godard collaborated on the scenario with Daniel Cohn-Bendit, and his influence is apparent. If Cohn-Bendit's book on *Obsolete Communism* is any indication, he takes seriously the first duty of a radical, which is self-criticism. Godard's film also attempts in earnest a radical critique of film-making, including Godard's own. This kind of honesty about one's function in the revolution doesn't come easily. With the notable exceptions of Lenin and Fidel Castro, even successful revolutionaries have seldom attempted it.

Godard's handling of the Western is a measure of his desire to work out a genuine radical critique of film-making. The opening scenes, for instance, are very ambitious. In them the relationship that has existed in Godard's work between documentary and fantasy is developed further. Godard is trying to establish a relationship equally complex, yet fluid, between history and art itself. When we first meet the cavalryman, he's walking guard duty on a wall. The wall is a mouldering ruin; it has literally crumbled out from under him without his noticing it, or so it seems. He plays a reactionary role in both history and art. His role in the former has become an anachronism; it is only in the latter that the colonial system he represents can continue to exist. The fantasy is distinguished from the living document as in earlier Godard films.

Other characters are also introduced in a

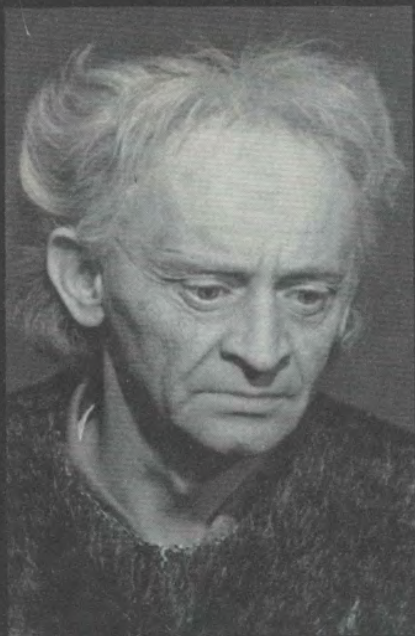
way that places them not only in the Western, but in *Wind from the East* as a whole. A fancy lady who travels in the cavalryman's entourage is first seen during a make-up session. The make-up man is carefully brushing out powder on her face. At the same time, shots of the Indian are intercut as he does his own make-up, which is war paint rather than movie cosmetics. He puts on this make-up himself because he's preparing for a new role in history, not art alone. He puts on layer after layer of the war paint until his face is transformed from that of an extinct race into a peculiar modern painting, a detail from a work of revolutionary poster art. In a few simple scenes like this Godard has cleared the political sight-lines for his entire film, for the Western and its critique alike. He has integrated political consciousness and film-making, at least for the moment. These scenes with which *Wind from the East* opens are classic Godard.

In addition to suggesting that Godard may now revise his career instead of abandoning it, *Wind from the East* suggests that he has inadvertently renewed rather than cancelled his membership in the New Wave. He has done so by making his first costume drama, and by returning to old problems that concerned him at the beginning of his career. For François Truffaut has just done these things too. In the same sense that *Wind from the East* remakes *A Bout de Souffle*, *L'Enfant Sauvage* may be said to remake *Les Quatre Cents Coups*. The analogy shouldn't however be carried too far. Truffaut is still making films. Godard is not, as Henri Langlois observed.

Wind from the East goes a long way toward clarifying what Godard is doing. When he was making the earlier films that have now fallen into his official disfavour, he conceived film-making as an activity that provides a context for current history and politics. *Two or Three Things* is impressive because it has this artistic size: by containing the present it justifies Godard's claim that his film-making is the art of the present. In the new films the perspective is altered. Politics and history have become a context for film-making, just as *Wind from the East* is a context for a Western. *Wind from the East* is then not a film, or at least not merely a film. It is that 'something else' M. Langlois spoke of.

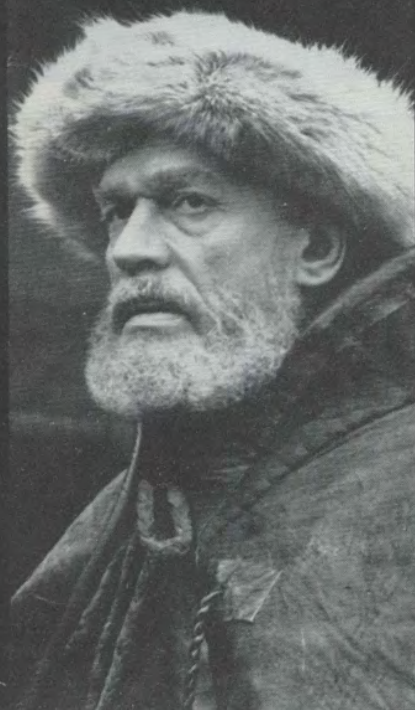
To understand better what it is, we shall just have to wait and see. Godard himself has always been contradictory on the relationship between politics and film-making. On the one hand he has said, 'I owe my political formation to the cinema.' If that's the case, he may now be able to repay the debt with more films. But he has also said that, 'There is really a tremendous cleavage between cinema and politics: those who understand politics don't understand cinema, and the lack of comprehension is reciprocal.' If this is the case, he may have to give up film-making after all, as he said he would. Perhaps the best statement to go by is one he made as a rejoinder to something Lenin wrote: 'It may be true... one has to choose between ethics and aesthetics, but it is no less true that whichever one chooses, one will always find the other at the end of the road.' We need only exchange politics for ethics in this statement, and we see Godard's career could not have been other than it is.





КОРОЛЬ ЛИР

KING LEAR



Left and above: Grigori Kozintsev's 'King Lear', with Yuri Jarvet as Lear (left) and Elsa Radzin, Gertrude in Kozintsev's 'Hamlet', as Goneril. Shot on location in Estonia, the film already looks like being a huge success in Russia, where one critic has called it 'A sculpture carved out of a solid piece of granite rock.' Adapted from the translation by Boris Pasternak, with music by Shostakovich.

Below left and below: Peter Brook's version of 'Lear' with Paul Scofield as the King and Irene Worth (below) as Goneril. Filmed on location two years ago in Denmark, with part of the budget provided by a Danish Film Fund grant and local Danish farmers making up the extras. 'We are looking at life in cold countries,' Brook has said of the film, his first Shakespearean adaptation for the screen.





*Kuleshov as young campaigner.
Below: lying in state at Dom Kino,
March 1970. Photo by Ronald Levaco.*

KULESHOV



Ronald Levaco

The peerless fifty-year career of Lev Kuleshov virtually spans the history of the Russian and Soviet film. Landmark theoretician, director, professor at VGIK, Moscow's All-Union Institute of Cinematography: the successes and failures of Kuleshov's life reflect the very ethos of the Soviet film. Yet, with few of his films shown in the West, and his several books and scores of articles untranslated into English, Kuleshov remains for us a shadowy background figure, an early experimenter trapped somewhere in the first chapters of a film history.

In fact, Kuleshov was the first aesthetic theorist of the cinema. In the introduction to his first book, published in 1929, a group of his disciples—among them Vsevolod Pudovkin—had written no less a tribute than: 'We make films—Kuleshov made cinematography.' By his own estimate, Kuleshov reckoned that over half the Soviet directors since 1920 had been his pupils; including most notably Pudovkin, Eisenstein, Barnet, Kolotozov and, more recently, Parajanov. His fascinating, many-sided career invites much wider attention and closer examination.

When I arrived in Moscow in late March of 1970, the city's streets still bore traces of a hard and icy winter. Mild, springlike weather was spreading over Central Europe, but here there were still gusts of the penetrating winter wind that I remembered was especially difficult for Kuleshov to endure. In letters to America (to Professor Steven Hill) Kuleshov had written about his susceptibility to the piercing draughts in the halls of VGIK, where he had lectured now for some twenty-five years. I knew that each of the last successive winters Kuleshov had suffered from what appeared to be a chronic respiratory illness. What I did not know was that Kuleshov, a heavy smoker, had been suffering for some time from lung cancer, and that at the age of seventy-one he had

died the day before my arrival.

For me, the trip to Moscow to meet Kuleshov was to have been the culmination of my research into his theories and translation of his writings, which I am at present completing. The subsequent few days were a sombre and unreal flurry of events: witnessing a most moving ceremony at Dom Kino, home of the Union of Soviet Cinematographers; attendance at Kuleshov's funeral; a warm meeting, first with his students and colleagues at VGIK and finally with his widow, Alexandra Khokhlova. Khokhlova, possibly a few years Kuleshov's senior, had not only been his constant companion throughout his career but also the principal actress in most of his films, as well as his production assistant.

In the main hall of Dom Kino, Kuleshov lay in state in an open coffin on a bier overlaid with flowers, while for several hours hundreds of people filed by. I was later told that the mourners consisted of virtually the collective membership of the Soviet film world. I remember a rare appearance by Lily Brik (Mayakovsky's mistress and the widow of Osip Brik, the literary critic and member of the Formalist circle, who had co-written one of Kuleshov's screenplays), an ephemeral, pale figure, starkly clad in black caftan and slacks, whose vividly red-dyed hair gave her a resemblance to Khokhlova. At Khokhlova's side much of the time was Pyotr Galadzhiev, one of the last survivors of the original Kuleshov Workshop. (The other, Leonid Obolensky, had been unable to travel from the Urals where he is a television director.) Someone mentioned to me that Viktor Shklovsky, considered by many the doyen of Soviet literary critics, an early Formalist, and co-author with Kuleshov of two screenplays, was at Dom Kino that afternoon.

Kuleshov was buried towards evening on March 31, at Novodevicha Cemetery in a grave alongside Vladimir Mayakovsky. Novodevicha is the cemetery where Turgenev, Chekhov and Gogol are buried, along with Russia's most distinguished artists, scientists and statesmen. Here, after the last memorial tributes were spoken by Kuleshov's colleagues from VGIK, among them Romm and Gerasimov, the cover of the coffin was put into place. It remains difficult to forget the tall, gaunt figure of Khokhlova, so composed until that moment, suddenly straining towards some last something. The almost palpable sensation was that, in a very large sense, the death of Kuleshov marked the end of the major epoch of Soviet cinematography.

Kuleshov was born on January 1, 1899 in Tambov, south-east of Moscow. The son of an artist, he became absorbed by drawing as a child. If childhood dreams and obsessions are ever indicative of the turns one's life takes, it may be significant that Kuleshov's artistic leanings were combined with a succession of dreams of jobs all of which involved an almost sensual fascination for machines. Though a fascination with machinery would hardly be uncommon, it is curious that Kuleshov's childhood interests bridged the mechanistic and aesthetic sensibilities later replicated in his theory of film.

After his father's death in 1910, Kuleshov was brought to Moscow by his mother, and

at fifteen enrolled in the School of Painting, Architecture and Sculpture, his intention being to become a painter. While at the school (where Mayakovsky also trained), his interests turned towards theatre design; but by chance he secured a job instead at the Khanzhonkov film studio, as a set-designer for the then noted director Evgeni Bauer.

The year was 1916, and although the cinema in Russia was flourishing and Kuleshov recalled enjoying watching such stars as Asta Nielsen and Max Linder, he remembered feeling no abiding fascination at first for the film. But that year and the next found him designing settings for Bauer's *King of Paris* and nine other features, as well as starring in Bauer's *After Happiness*. Kuleshov's disastrous, unschooled experience with acting may well have influenced the theories he was later to evolve, for his attempt at a 'naturalistic' performance seemed painfully ludicrous to him when he watched it on the screen. While working with Bauer, Kuleshov was introduced to and became impressed by what was then called 'American montage'—the rapid cutting, frequent close-ups and parallel lines of action of American films, particularly Griffith's. When Bauer, to whom Kuleshov had grown devoted, died while shooting *After Happiness*, it fell to Kuleshov to complete the film; and afterwards, though he recalled that work without Bauer became unfulfilling, he none the less pressed for a directorial assignment with Khanzhonkov.

Here, in 1917, he completed his first film, made in the style of 'American montage' (later to become internationally known as 'Russian montage'), *The Project of Engineer Prite*. Apparently shot just after the Revolution, *Prite* was a semi-detective, semi-propaganda film with an industrial theme. The plot was thin, but the surviving two reels already reveal Kuleshov's predilection for outdoor environments and his eye for composition and architecture. Kuleshov himself described *Prite* as the first Soviet film to be 'constructed dynamically and editorially, with the use of close-ups.' (Hill, p.6)

It was while shooting *Prite* that Kuleshov became aware of the first of several unique properties of montage which he was to describe in a succession of theoretical articles and books, beginning in 1917. What Kuleshov discovered was that it was possible to create, solely through montage, a cinematic terrain which existed nowhere in reality. As is often the case, the discovery came about quite accidentally when, missing some shots of his actors looking at electrical cables strung on poles, Kuleshov conjectured that the same effect could be achieved by splicing shots of actors looking off-camera with separately taken shots of the row of poles. As the poles and the actors were in different parts of Moscow, Kuleshov decided to term the effect the 'artificial landscape' (also known as 'creative geography'); and although concepts such as these may seem ingenuous in retrospect, it is important to note that they had not yet been articulated, so far as can be known, by anyone else.

The most diverse cross-currents characterised this period of Kuleshov's apprenticeship. The dynamism, eclecticism and radicalism of the times was translated into electric avant-garde cliques such as the Constructivists, Futurists and Formalists. At the same

time, supporters of the Provisional Government sensed apocalypse hanging heavy in the air. In a culture which traditionally vibrated with occultism, the spirit of mediums like Mme. Blavatsky, who had died some twenty years before, in part prefigured the mystical extravagance and sensuality of composers like Scriabin, painters like Kandinsky, maestros like Diaghilev. Apace with another current pervasive in Russia at the beginning of the century, Marxist artists with a Promethean vision of man's capability to transform his world began to see their art wedded to a new and social purpose.

And what about the moving pictures which it had been intellectually fashionable to deride before the Revolution? Avant-garde film-makers had harboured a vigorously expressed contempt for the socially purposeless aestheticism and theatricality of the 'naturalistic' Moscow Art Theatre, and for the potboilers of pre-Revolutionary cinema, the excesses of the melodramas, drawing-room farces and romances which they saw as symptomatic of a decadent bourgeois sensibility. Committed to artistic innovation in which social consciousness was fused with their aesthetics, revolutionary artists began producing manifestos which audaciously represented the positions of their particular groups. Mayakovsky's 'Theatre, Cinema, Futurism', published in 1913, can be regarded as a precursor of what soon became a deluge of such manifestos. Groups like the Futurists were prepared to embrace the cinema as a mass art of unprecedented power; and in such a climate, the development of an aesthetic for the film could be an auspicious venture. It is ironic that the fierce exhortations for social commitment in the arts, which legitimised film as art in the Soviet state, also foreshadowed the very ideological tangles that enmeshed film-makers like Kuleshov and Eisenstein during the Thirties.

From the first, Kuleshov was absorbed by formal, structural problems. To some extent, he certainly benefited from the hermeneutics of the early Formalists, the Opoyaz and Moscow Linguistic Circle, who were developing a structuralist heuristic for dealing with literature as a system of signs. Some of the most prominent of the Formalists were to be quite active in film in later years. Among these, as has been mentioned, both Shklovsky and Brik were to co-author scripts with Kuleshov.

In theatre circles, two representative currents of thought emerged through essays espousing semi-contrary positions (both published roughly at the same time in 1912-13), which might shed additional light on the evolution of Kuleshov's work. Both positions were, at their deepest, essentially classicist reactions to the excesses and decadence of, especially, the performing arts. The first was Leonid Andreyev's, the second Vsevolod Meyerhold's. Andreyev proposed that the way to a resuscitation of spiritless theatrical forms was through concentration on the 'inner soul drama' and the 'extensions of the pan-psyche'. He exhorted the theatre to abandon activity, crowd movements, in fact all the 'reproduction of visible, physical life', relegating them to the cinema where he felt them to belong. (Leyda, pp. 56-57).

Meyerhold, on the other hand, championed

the return of the theatre to more primitive actor-audience relationships, to the methods of the *commedia dell'arte* and the use of the actor's body as equivalent in expression to the spoken word. (Leyda, p.58) Clearly for the cinema, for Kuleshov, the two positions were not mutually exclusive. As his theoretical work and his most celebrated film, *By the Law*, evidence, he was to show a proclivity for both.

Kuleshov's own preferences inclined him towards analysis: towards systematisation, simplification, clarity. He sought to identify the 'material' of the cinema and reasoned that it must be the celluloid itself, not the photographic image. For as music was the manipulation and ordering of sounds, and painting the application and ordering of pigments, cinema was quintessentially the ordering of strips of film. For Kuleshov that was the *sine qua non*—what he termed the 'filmness' of the cinema. Consistent with that line of reasoning, he audaciously announced that what was conventionally called the narrative or dramatic 'content' of a film was irrelevant to the structuring of its 'material'. Accordingly, Kuleshov wrote in one of his earliest articles that the predetermined order in which pieces of film were joined—or montage—was the irreducible source, the alpha and omega, of the cinematographic impact on the viewer, and reiterated that how the shots were assembled was more important than what they were about. (Kuleshov, pp. 16–18)

This provocative conclusion made it possible (indeed, necessary) for Kuleshov to begin considering a whole series of problems concerning film acting—problems into which the Meyerholdian concept of the actor's body as a 'word-equivalent' could be integrated. Coterminously, Kuleshov defined the shot as a 'shot-sign' which could be syntactically integrated, itself as a 'word-equivalent', into a film comprised of other shots. Thus: the obvious analogy of *film* and *sentence* (which Kuleshov did use early on) and the subsequent, now infamous dictum that a film is built 'brick by brick' (the repudiation of which Eisenstein swaggeringly handled in three or four short paragraphs of his essay 'Za kadrom', published in 1929).

Kuleshov's searchings also led him to consider whether, under the powerful influence of montage, the spectator perceives an intentionally created *Gestalt* in which the relationship of shot to shot overrides the finer aspects of any actor's performance. The famous 'Kuleshov effect' with the Russian actor Mozhukhin affirmed the speculation. Having found a long take in close-up of Mozhukhin's expressionlessly neutral face, Kuleshov intercut it with various shots, the exact content of which he himself forgot in later years—shots, according to Pudovkin, of a bowl of steaming soup, a woman in a coffin and a child playing with a toy bear—and projected these to an audience which marvelled at the sensitivity of the actor's range. (Pudovkin, p. 140)

During the following years, 1919–20, the outbreak of war between White and Red armies created a documentary theatre and training ground for young Soviet artists. Penetrating the combat zones in agit-trains, film-makers, poets and artists (among them Dziga-Vertov, Eisenstein and Mayakovsky)

set out to polemicise the war. As an enviably experienced film-maker, Kuleshov was able to shoot several short films (called *agitkas* and precursors of later, more developed forms of agit-prop), culminating in the unique two-reeler *On the Red Front*. Completed in 1920, *On the Red Front* was the first Soviet film to combine documentary footage with acted sequences.

Travelling between the front and Moscow during these years, Kuleshov found his interests in film theory and pedagogy were unabated, and in 1919 he became active in organising the first State Film School. That September, he began to conduct classes which led to the formation in 1920 of the Kuleshov Workshop. With the Workshop—it comprised, among others, Khokhlova, Pudovkin (seven years his teacher's senior) and, for a few months, Eisenstein—Kuleshov pursued experiments in montage. He created other 'artificial landscapes' in which actors walked 'towards' each other from different, distant sections of Moscow and suddenly met in a two-shot. He combined shots of the White House with shots of the steps of a well-known Moscow building up which he had his actors walk, thus creating non-existent buildings in non-existent cities. He 'synthesised' a woman filmically by combining separate shots of several women's bodies. In short, he sought to demonstrate that physical space and 'real' time could be made totally subservient to montage. And he sought to prove, in turn, that the source of the associational power of montage was in the viewer's consciousness, his perception of the edited material, which did not necessarily bear any relationship to 'objective reality'. Such formalism was to prove heretical to the more truculent party ideologues, who saw in this preoccupation with form and structure the potential submergence of vital and 'objective' themes and truths which it was imperative for the cinema to convey to the Soviet masses. For the zealous, 21-year-old Kuleshov, however, the machinations of party judgment were a distant, perhaps inaudible thunder.

Kuleshov was aware that his previous conclusions about the shot as 'sign' required the formation of a rigorous course, in which actors could learn to express themselves within what one Soviet critic called the sparse, laconic and unambiguous shots into which his style of cinema was evolving. (Zorkaya, p.18) Evoking the use of actors by such modern directors as Bresson, Antonioni and Resnais, the Kuleshov method sought to clarify and externalise the actor's emotions before the camera, to systematise and virtually to codify his use of physiognomy and gesture to express specific emotional states. This was a Meyerholdian emphasis on gesture and the grotesque now married to the pseudo-scientific studies of bodily expression by the 19th century Frenchman François Delsarte, whom Kuleshov was then studying (and from whom Eisenstein possibly derived his 'typeage').

Kuleshov began to term his actors 'models' and to regard them virtually as mannequins. He demanded of them the most arduous physical preparation and the ability to perform any trick, any movement of the body, hands or legs. (Zorkaya, p.20) This use of actors was then enhanced by placing them into contexts with fairly prominent, carefully chosen objects which would convey character

traits or moods. In *Your Acquaintance* (1927), for example, Kuleshov was to use an absurd glass elephant on a wall shelf and a coat-hanger thrust into a vase to evoke what he felt to be the essence of the room and its resident. It was a primitive cinematic iconology.

By 1920 Kuleshov's group had begun to work on exercises that evolved into what came to be known as the 'films without film'. Reconciling themselves to dire shortages of film stock, the Workshop took up the construction of *études*, which were performed as if before a camera. (In principle, this system was carried over to VGIK where, with modifications, it is still used.) To assist his student-actors, Kuleshov conceived the cinematic space as analogous to a pyramid resting on its side, the base of which would be the rectangular screen. To assess composition and facilitate the plotting of movement, he went so far as to describe the space in graphic terms as a three-dimensional 'metric net' formed of a web of horizontal and vertical lines (like graph paper, only projected into three-dimensional space). Thus, within this solid geometric space, any movement or shape could be explicitly described and analysed. What Kuleshov failed to describe explicitly was how this topological notation could be handled. Nonetheless, speculating that because the predictable lines and angles of industrial architecture were more distinct on the screen than, say, an ornate shot of a rural village, Kuleshov used the concept of the 'metric net' to conclude (speciously) that the strongest line of movement on the screen would fall along one of the horizontal or vertical lines of the 'net', and would thus be either parallel or perpendicular to the edges of the screen.

Despite such blind alleys, Kuleshov searched tirelessly for general laws governing the relationship of actor movement to cutting and composition. He strove to make his actors aware of *duration as movement*—a first principle of the cinema that is still valid, namely that screen action always has to conform to the imperatives of cutting, the montage of a particular sequence as conceived by the director, in order to be locked into the structure of a film. In that sense, Kuleshov's intent was to create a director's cinema and to produce actors with a director's sensitivity—which may well account for the fact that several of the Workshop, Khokhlova, Obolensky, Boris Barnet and Pudovkin, went on to become directors. Needless to say, his system demanded scrupulous preplanning; which, according to its proponents, did allow for creative impulse and the luxury of errors—but in rehearsal rather than on film.

The 'films without film' thus involved strict exercises in which the most seemingly basic and 'natural' movements were systematically broken down to their most minute, irreducible components (perhaps suggestive of the linguist's approach to 'ordinary' speech). Obviously this produced a spare, stylised aesthetic of acting at best only suited for a silent cinema. Yet, ironically, even Kuleshov's silent films are characterised as much by violation of his principles as by their observance; for his actor-training seemed to serve as the proverbial canon from which actors could diverge. At all

events, Kuleshov's theories were, with little doubt, a pioneer attempt to come to grips, however primitively, with an acting 'code' or method of expression for the screen: a prolegomenon for a semiology of film acting. Shunning intuition and striving to arrest any tendency towards the hyperbolic style, especially of Stanislavskian acting, Kuleshov admittedly created an ascetic style which his actors often transcended. What remains difficult, as always, is gauging the extent to which creative energy straining against the impositions of technique contributed to a successful end result.

Having recruited a stock company composed of budding actors and ex-athletes, Kuleshov made, in 1924, a detective satire called *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks*. West served multiple purposes. First, it was (as *The Death Ray* was to be) a catalogue of effects, and a means to show off the cinematic sophistication of the Workshop in its first big venture. Secondly, it was the first post-Revolutionary comedy in the Sennettesque style of the Americans, coming during arduous years when the market for laughter was great and when Kuleshov wanted to demonstrate his ability to compete with Hollywood. Thirdly, it was at once a satire on the ludicrous preconceptions Americans ostensibly had about Soviet Russia and a parody of American detective thrillers. With its Harold Lloyd-like central figure, a senator and YMCA official who comes to Russia to see it for himself, its episodic plot and chases, *West* was an instant success.

By 1925, Kuleshov, who had worked with Eisenstein on structuring crowd scenes, completed a sort of science-fiction thriller called *The Death Ray*. Much more dramatically diffuse and thematically pedestrian than *Strike* (to which its crowd scenes have been unfavourably compared), *The Death Ray* was additionally encumbered by a tangled plot written by Pudovkin. It dealt with the theft of a secret laser-like ray, stolen from its Soviet inventor by a group of (prophetically conceived) Fascists, and its eventual recovery. Much less architectonic than *Strike*, the crowd sequences of *The Death Ray* had nonetheless (as perhaps their only virtue) a realistic, almost documentary appearance. Because they are not contained within the quadrant of the frame but consistently 'spill over' and extend somewhere beyond it, these sequences evoke the style of such recent films as Jancsó's *The Red and the White*, in which the camera attempts to perceive but not to impose form on the event.

The following year must have seemed an inauspicious one for Kuleshov. With *The Death Ray* under attack as neither economically nor ideologically justified, Kuleshov was on the verge of being dropped by his studio. (Leyda, p. 212) After looking vainly for a lower-budget script to shoot, he set about adapting a story of Jack London's, *The Unexpected*, with the collaboration of Viktor Shklovsky, and managed to complete the scenario in one night. The studio, Goskino (later Sovkino), accepted the script, and shooting began on what was to be Kuleshov's finest and most celebrated film.

By the Law (also known as *Dura Lex*) deals with the shattering effect of 'the unexpected' on the minds of people whose lives are



'Mr West in the Land of the Bolsheviks'

largely unexamined, canalised by tradition, and who govern themselves strictly by established ethical codes. Set almost entirely in a one-room cabin, the film makes no use of parallel lines of action and sustains an intensity which was achieved, in the words of the Soviet dramatist Tretyakov, 'in the spirit of an algebraic formula, seeking the maximum of effect with the minimum of effort.' In a desolate region of the Yukon, during the Gold Rush, five prospectors share both the cabin and their claim. Suspecting the others of hatching a plot to make off with the whole stake, Michael Dennin guns down two of the plotters. Intent on upholding a semblance of legality, the other pair, Hans and Edith Nelson, still feel obliged to try the murderer before they execute him. Performing a ritual trial made ludicrous by their circumstances, the Nelsons unremittably exact their moral retribution, as Dennin's God-fearing, law-abiding peers. But their own tensions become unbearable. The grim denouement is a hanged Dennin, a cataleptic Edith, and a brutalised Hans. Diverging from London's ending, in which Dennin dies on the rope, grotesquely dancing on the air, while a group of Indians watch uncomprehendingly from a clearing, the final sequences of the film show Dennin staggering from the hanging-tree to haunt the cabin, the frayed end of the broken rope still around his neck. In shock, unable within their own code of justice to hang the same man twice, the Nelsons are themselves condemned to living with their final memory of Dennin stumbling off through the incessant rain into the darkness of the night.

In his workshop *études*, as in his previous films, Kuleshov had striven to choreograph and encode a kinesthetic drama for the screen. He thrust his actors into an overt dramatic world of somersaults, tricks, leaps, battles and chases. He mistrusted the cinema's potential for depicting man's interior world; and, indeed, perhaps as some legacy of industrial mechanisation, mistrusted the indulgence of any dramatic art which was preoccupied with the interior. Now, the need to tackle the acutely psychological *By the Law* augured a reassessment. If Andreyev's exclusion of the cinema from the 'inner-soul drama' was correct, *By the*



'By the Law': the prospectors in their cabin

Law would seem destined for disaster. On the other hand, if Kuleshov could penetrate the drama of Edith Nelson's struggle to resolve the tension of her dogmatic sense of justice versus her tortured compassion for Dennin, he should accomplish it using the very principles of film theory he had invested nearly ten years in formulating. What Kuleshov's success with *By the Law* affirmed was that montage, as the syntactic structure of film, dictates no imperatives, no textual substance of its own. It is the very structure of the cinema, the linguistic system as it were, the cinematic 'code' which pre-existed, as Peter Wollen puts it in *Signs and Meanings in the Cinema*, the 'message' of any given film. Through montage, Kuleshov could draw the viewer into the dramatic space in a way that conventional theatre could not do. What remained was to lock the dramatic content into the montage, and Kuleshov accomplished this with some measure of success.

For example, in the execution sequence, the spasmodic movements of Khokhlova's

rawboned arms—at once an affirmation toward heaven and an imprecation of her wretchedness—become physical analogues to the skeletal limbs of the twisted hanging-tree. The branches of the tree and Khokhlova's spindly arms, silhouetted in long-shot against an expanse of grey winter sky, with the horizon set almost at the bottom of the frame, evoke the terrible solitude of the marionette-like figures acting out their pantomime of justice in the vacuous space of the shot. Then, as Edith struggles to push the barrel from beneath Dennin's feet as he awaits his plunge to death, Kuleshov cuts to a close-up of her sliding feet as the traction, the grip on things which they seek, eludes them. To separate out the evidence of montage in such a sequence, one must consider what is uniquely filmic in it. For while the same sequence could be rendered in a number of narrative forms, the principle used to render it on film—that peculiar set of cinematic options—is montage.

In *By the Law* Kuleshov also exercised some of those options early in the film. A sequence like the following can create an air of tension through the alternation of shots with intentionally unsteady and unstable composition: one lone pine tree is shown momentarily; then the wind-blown hair of Edith Nelson; then the wind whipping the corner of a canvas tent. People's movements are sudden and jerky. The contrast of black-clad figures is emphatic against the snow. Here, what was absent in Kuleshov's earlier films—a sense of mood—pervades the film.

What Kuleshov evolved in *By the Law* was an adaptation of his earlier, more ascetic and mechanistic concepts, now applied to a cinema of microcosm, a cinema of precisely the kind of 'inner soul drama' which Andreyev had reserved for the theatre. To do so (much as Romm did the following year in the remarkable *Bed and Sofa*), Kuleshov had to move his camera to work from 'inside' the film, as it were, to probe his characters more intensely than any Soviet film had done. Despite that (indeed, in large measure because of it), *By the Law* was stormily received by many Soviet critics. For some the film lacked ideological attack. For others

'By the Law': the approach to the hanging-tree, 'silhouetted in long shot against an expanse of grey winter sky . . .'





'The Great Consoler': Khokhlova after the shooting of the detective

it was simply too morbid. In an era of Soviet film-making which inspired Moussinac's 'Un film d'Eisenstein rassemble à un cri, un film de Poudovkine évoque un chant' (Leyda, p.221), Kuleshov's film seemed rather to engender a dirge.

For Kuleshov, the director, this was the beginning of a period of failure, struggle, and eventual ideological recantation. His subsequent three silent features, *Your Acquaintance* (also *The Journalist*, 1927), *The Gay Canary* (1929) and *The Great Buldis* (1930), were all unsuccessful. None of them films with inspiring revolutionary themes, they must have seemed all the more lustreless to Soviet audiences by comparison with their contemporaries, *The End of St. Petersburg*, *October* or *Arsenal*. His flagging spirits and his reputation only partially upheld by the publication in 1929 of his first major theoretical work, *Art of the Cinema*, Kuleshov continued working on several short documentaries and information films. During the next few years, having transferred, probably under duress, Kuleshov found himself additionally faced with the studio bosses' rejection of Khokhlova as simply not 'box-office'. It was decidedly a period of eclipse.

In 1932, again with the collaboration of Shklovsky (and G. Mundblit), Kuleshov wrote the scenario for a film he called *Horizon*, about a Russian Jew's emigration to the United States during the period of the pogroms, his devastating disillusionment there, and eventual return to his now Soviet motherland. Gamely, Kuleshov faced the transition to sound, struggling to bring to it the same demands for verisimilitude that had been his hallmark in the silent cinema. In *Horizon* there was no instance of off-camera music which was not motivated by the story; what seemed for an instant like background music would be revealed as coming from, say, a garden orchestra or an upstairs piano. Moreover, Kuleshov paid scrupulous attention to sound perspective—the quality of sound at a distance—rather than merely to its volume. That, and *Horizon's* rather accurate depiction of the

desolation of urban America (gleaned largely from American films) made Kuleshov's first sound venture uncommonly modern.

Still, his silent-film aesthetics of montage looked antiquated when grafted on to sound cinema. In *Horizon*, shots of short duration and static composition simply became dreary. The sense of what a Soviet critic has called a sort of despondency or vacuousness characteristic of the Kuleshovian shot, and so expressive in the silents, somehow now became simply too plaintive and sentimental. (Zorkaya, pp. 38–39) With actors the situation was even worse. Having become used to demonstrating a single, unambiguous emotion in a short-montage shot, actors now provided with text and dialogue, and stuck before a camera for necessarily longer takes, seemed lifelessly wooden. That problem was accentuated by the declamatory training most Russian actors had received, especially from Kuleshov's bane, the Moscow Art Theatre.

All these difficulties were still to beleague Kuleshov in his next film, the final one within the scope of interest here. *The Great Consoler* (1933) seems to me the film in which a weary and assailed Kuleshov attempted to pose his own dilemma as a Soviet artist. During the late Twenties and early Thirties, a number of incidents cast a pall over the Soviet film world—as, indeed, over all the arts. The suicides of Esenin in 1925 and of Mayakovsky in 1930, the collapse of such spirited avant-garde movements as LEF (The Left Front in Literature), the abolition of all private printing at the close of the period of the NEP, and Stalin's demand before the Sixteenth Party Congress for greater control over the arts, all portended the period of terror and the purges of the next two decades. Long before the official invocation of socialist realism in 1934, the editor of the leading philosophical journal of the time, Debordin, had argued that art could only be transformed by profound social and economic change, and that therefore no culture could precede and serve the imperatives of a new proletarian society. Debordin's was essentially a classical Marx-Bukharin interpretation of the relationship of art to

culture and politics. But by 1925, the formation of the reactionary Association of Proletarian Writers (VAPP) and its film-workers equivalent (ARRK), made it clear that Debordin's warning was to go unheeded. The transformation of the arts into a service industry and of the artist into cadre had begun.

Kuleshov's *The Great Consoler* was released in the thick of the wranglings which culminated in the official adoption of socialist realism by the Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934. Loosely based on the period in prison of William Sydney Porter (O. Henry), the film took up the question of the writer's responsibility to represent reality as he knows it, without amelioration, for the presumably sensitive reader, and thus possibly to reinforce the reader's suffering. The film operated on multiple levels, mixing illusion and reality, interweaving biographical material from Porter's time in an Ohio penitentiary with segments from his stories.

In Kuleshov's film, Porter spends his time in prison talking with one of his own fictional characters, the safecracker Jimmy Valentine. Racked by tuberculosis, Valentine is heartened by one of Porter's stories in which he sees himself depicted as a dapper, elegant hero and, by succumbing to wish-fulfilling fantasies instead of struggling for a redress of his grievances with a brutal judicial system, is rendered utterly impotent. Shifting to a dream sequence, Kuleshov shows us a graceful, healthy Valentine using his skills to crack a safe in which a little girl is trapped. He becomes the town hero and, as is the custom, marries the pretty lady who happens to be the child's aunt. Then, there is an abrupt shift to 'reality'. Valentine is dragged out of prison and coerced to free the little girl with false promises of clemency. In drab prison garb, on the verge of death, his talents as a safecracker are exploited; after the rescue, his sand-papered fingertips bleeding, he is taken back to prison to die in ignominy. Meanwhile, Porter is rewarded by the authorities for his exemplary docility—given books and paper and made a trusty.

We shift to another level of the narrative. The shopgirl Dulcey (Khokhlova) also 'loses herself' in O. Henry's fiction to escape the desolation of her life. But, compromised by a seedy detective, Ben Price, to whose seduction she succumbs out of poverty and loneliness, it is Dulcey who finally rejects the rose-tinted world of her 'consoler', O. Henry, and rises up against Price to shoot him. Ruin all around him, Porter realises too late the polemical power of the pen, which he might have used towards altering the repressive social order he cajoled his readers into accepting.

Technically, *The Great Consoler* suffered from some glaring shortcomings. The rather complex structure of the narrative was not well-handled, which made transitions awkward and advanced the plot so unevenly that the shape of the film suffered. Kuleshov was further hampered by the primitive quality of Soviet film stock (this was the first time domestic Soviet stock was used for a sound feature), and any further effects with sound initiated in *Horizon* were impossible. The sound quality was, in fact, poorer than in *Horizon*. Lumbered with Khokhlova's former husband as O. Henry, Kuleshov had to

The other face of W.C.FIELDS

Louise Brooks



Almost as cautiously as he won success in the theatre and films during the Twenties, W. C. Fields won the hearts of American schoolboys during the Sixties. A curious idol. For he has become their beloved, not so much because they appreciate his comic art based on the years of work he spent practising juggling, perfecting his timing which is almost the whole of comedy, but because they imagine him to be a character like Quilp in Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Quilp fell on the floor rolling with laughter when he forced Sampson Brass to drink boiling rum and water. Fields is supposed to have pleased himself by spiking Baby Leroy's milk with a possibly lethal dose of gin.

It is the word *work* in the above paragraph that makes the schoolboys' love affair with Fields suspect. Work is a dirty word in their vocabulary; and Fields is perhaps the only comedian who reveals, through his stately procedures, the passionate amount of work he put into his performance.

Many schoolboys write to me and come to see me. Most of them know only my name and have never seen any of my films. They approach me with wildly uninformed flattery after which, presuming me to be a forlorn old actress full of gratitude, they expect me to fill their arms with my most precious still pictures and sit three hours at the typewriter composing material which they will muck about, sign with their names and present to the teachers of their film classes.

Where Fields is concerned it does not take me long to learn that these boys have seen few of his films, and in discussing any of them they have great difficulty remembering its title or whether they saw the whole of it or an excerpted reel or two. The Fields they idolise is the man they read about and superimpose on the Fields they see on the screen.

If, when I wrote my first film article in 1956, I had known how many film biographies and autobiographies I would have to read in order to check my memories, I would have thrown my typewriter out the window before I became addicted to the writing habit.

In 1778 Samuel Johnson wrote: 'Pointed axioms and acute replies fly loose about the world, and are assigned successively to those whom it may be the fashion to celebrate.' In 1922, when I first arrived in New York, I heard every gag, joke and anecdote which, over the past fourteen years of reading, have brought me to a condition of nausea as I find them 'assigned successively' to film celebrities. There are two categories of celebrities fitted with appropriate anecdotes that writers and readers appear to dote on with foolish untiring enthusiasm. They are the

'It's the Old Army Game': W. C. Fields and Louise Brooks

tramp-type star delineated by her outrageous conduct, and the drunken actor whose cruel antics are termed hilarious. In the first category is the favourite anecdote about the star who goes into a smart restaurant clad only in a mink coat and a pair of slippers. Beneath the coat she is naked! The question is how is it known, her nakedness? Does she do a strip-tease? In that case the management would swiftly bundle her into a waiting cab and every newspaper across the country would carry the story. Journalists refer to the mink coat anecdote as a 'possible' item because it *could* happen. It has happened but not to a star with the eyes of the press upon her. No documentation ever confirms this anecdote assigned to stars like Jean Harlow.

Thomas Gray said that 'Men will believe anything at all provided they are under no obligation to believe it.' In the second category of drunken actor anecdotes, out of the myths surrounding Irish wakes, writers have contrived an item so impossible that no film reader doubts it for an instant. This *funny* story tells about a bunch of drunks who steal the body of an actor friend from his casket in a funeral home and set it up in a chair in another friend's house, during his absence. Surprise! Surprise! I have consulted funeral directors and the police about this repulsive prank and find that breaking into a funeral home would immediately arouse the police and get the pranksters clapped into jail. It is not necessary to add that such a frolic with the body of W. C. Fields would attract the notice of the press.

Where two or three are gathered together in his name they do not waste time discussing Fields' films; they get right down to their 'favourite stories' about the 'little guy who looked life in the eye and told it where to go.' With more than forty years separating them from the Fields of the theatre and his unseen early films, his admirers must rely on the word of journalists like Roger Doughty, who writes, 'Fields' characterisation of a seedy, irascible, sharp-tongued drunk with a bulbous nose and an ice-cold heart made him a headliner in the Ziegfeld Follies, George White's Scandals, Earl Carroll's Vanities and such films as *Never Give a Sucker an Even Break* and *If I had a Million* . . . in later years he jousts with Charlie McCarthy on Edgar Bergen's radio show.' The facts of Fields' character development are these: in 1923-24 he appeared on Broadway in the musical comedy *Poppy*. He played a small-time bungling cheat, an affectionate father with no trace of drunkenness. William LeBaron saw *Poppy*, and when he became head of production at Paramount's Long Island studio he gave Fields a contract in 1925. *If I had a Million* was released in 1932. Fields worked on Edgar Bergen's radio show in 1937 and 1938. *Never Give a Sucker an Even Break* was released in 1941.

Speaking of Edgar Bergen, another writer, Jim Harmon, quotes him as saying, 'Fields would be drinking in the morning, drinking at noon, drinking in the afternoon. But he never acted as if he were drunk.' On his own, Harmon goes on to call Fields 'a man of monumental pettiness and eccentricity, with a hundred categories of hatreds and dislikes.' What, I wonder, is the source of this line written in 1970?

Bernard Sobel was the press agent of the

Ziegfeld Follies for ten years. He covered most of Fields' appearances in that show including his last in 1925. At that time Bill was a man of forty-six, completely formed as a comedian, completely set as a private person. Sobel in his book *Broadway Heartbeat* (1953), writing about Fields' distorted biographies, says, 'Hollywood made him an autocrat whose odd behaviour was matched only by his drinking prowess. Somehow, I can't believe that Fields let fame distort him.'

No, it wasn't fame that distorted Fields. It was sickness and the clutching fear of being discarded to die on the Hollywood rubbish heap. If he must play a nasty old drunk and be publicised as a nasty old drunk in order to work on the Edgar Bergen radio show, then so be it. He was an isolated person. As a young man he stretched out his hand to Beauty and Love and they thrust it away. Gradually he reduced reality to exclude all but his work, filling the gaps with alcohol whose dim eyes transformed the world into a distant view of harmless shadows. He was also a solitary person. Years of travelling alone around the world with his juggling act taught him the value of solitude and the release it gave his mind. He abhorred bars, nightclubs, parties and other people's houses. He seems to have left no diaries, no letters, no serious autobiographical material. Most of his life will remain unknown. But the history of no life is a jest.

The tragedy of film history is that it is fabricated, falsified in truth and in fact, by the very people who make film history. In the early years of film production, when nobody believed there was going to be any film history, it was understandable that most film magazines and books printed trash which aimed only at fulfilling the public's wish of sharing a fairytale existence with its movie idols. But since about 1950 film has been established as an art and its history recognised as a serious matter. Yet film celebrities continue to cast themselves as stock types of nice or naughty girls, of good or bad boys whom their chroniclers (to quote Ortega) 'spray with a shower of anecdotes'.

The most heartbreaking of all these books is Mack Sennett's *King of Comedy* (1954), taped and written by Cameron Shipp. Except in superficial observations Sennett had not faith enough in his genius to risk a serious, luminous exposition of his world of comedy and the immortal grotesques who inhabited it. This world of universal laughter which was silenced by exclusion when the film corporations lengthened their feature films, filling out programmes with animated cartoons and newsreels. As a part of film history, as a person who was *there*, Sennett might have given readers the truth about the mysteriously manipulated scandals which destroyed two of his greatest stars—Mabel Normand and Fatty Arbuckle. But he so abused dates and facts that, for the most part, his anecdotes are historically worthless. What he had to say about Fields' salary and drinking habits is simply a footnote to his own vanity.

Only one line in his book reminds me of the Mack Sennett I used to see in the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel when I was living there in 1936. Almost every day from about noon he would sit in the lobby for a couple of hours, smoking his cigars, watching the people go by. He was then but fifty-one—this big, healthy, wonderfully handsome and

virile man. How could *he* have allowed himself to be discarded to die on the Hollywood rubbish heap? Although he spoke to no one, he was never bored. As he followed with keen and unembarrassed attention my flights in and out of the hotel, I wondered what thoughts lay behind the expressionless mask he wore in public. Now I know he was practising the art of paying attention. In his book, speaking of working for D. W. Griffith in New York, he says: 'I learned all I ever learned about making pictures by standing around watching people who knew how.' Anyone who has achieved excellence in any form knows that it comes as a result of ceaseless concentration. Paying attention.

I was in the Ziegfeld Follies with W. C. Fields in 1925. I was eighteen when I cabled Otto Kahn, the New York banker, begging him to rescue me from London where I was dancing the Charleston at the Café de Paris. He cabled Edmund Goulding, the future film director who was visiting his family in London, telling Eddie to pay my rent at 49A Pall Mall and deposit me on the S.S. *Homer* sailing for New York on February 14th. Upon my arrival there, Ziegfeld, who had been looking for me ever since I disappeared from the chorus of *George White's Scandals* in September 1924, gave me a job in *Louie the 14th*, a musical comedy starring Leon Errol. It opened at William Randolph Hearst's Cosmopolitan Theatre in March 1925. The stage director of *Louie* was Teddy Royce (who died in England in 1965 at the age of 94). He was an elfin creature with snapping black eyes who whisked about on the coldest winter days dressed only in a tweed suit and a grey cashmere scarf wound around his neck. He detested all of Ziegfeld's spoiled beauties, but most of all me because on occasion, when I had other commitments, I would wire my non-appearance to the theatre. One day in June he called the girls together on stage after the Wednesday matinée. I came on last, standing inconspicuously at the end of the line on the right. Centred behind the orchestra pit stood Mr. Royce sipping his gin and water. After some vague remarks about the lack of discipline in the theatre, he looked sharply at me and said, 'Some girls in this show are using the theatre exclusively as a show case.' All the girls looked at me too and grinned happily. I was humiliated and insulted. I rushed to the little den under the stage box which Mr. Ziegfeld used for consultations and told him how Mr. Royce had publicly humiliated and insulted me. He smiled his charming silver fox smile and instantly transferred me to the Follies.

When I arrived backstage at the New Amsterdam Theatre to start rehearsals for the summer edition of the Follies I asked Billy Shrode, the stage manager, for the number of my dressing-room. He looked at my make-up box, he looked at the call board upon which was posted a list of dressing-rooms and their occupants, then he looked at me. 'To tell you the truth, Louise,' he said, laughing in spite of himself, 'I've asked them all and there's not a girl in the show willing to dress with you.' Having won no popularity contests with the girls in the *Scandals* and *Louie the 14th*, I received this news without comment. 'What the devil do you do to these girls?' Shrode asked. 'I don't do anything to them.' 'Maybe that's it,' he said and turned

back shaking his head at the dressing-room list.

The fierce status battles over theatre dressing-rooms have sometimes driven stars from shows and even closed them. The dressing-room situation in the New Amsterdam was peculiar in that, because of the city fire laws, it was the only theatre in New York sheathed in an office building. Off stage on the ground floor was the single star dressing-room. Because Will Rogers came to the theatre wearing his cowboy outfit, carrying his lasso, and chewing his gum, ready to go on stage for his monologue, there was no problem about giving the star dressing-room to W. C. Fields. Breaking all the other rules of protocol, Ziegfeld devoted the second floor to his show girls who, in case they missed the elevator, must not exhaust themselves walking down more than a single flight of stairs to the stage. The principals dressed on the third floor, the chorus girls on the fourth. On the fifth floor was another single dressing-room, a duplicate of the star's. Dorothy Knapp, Ziegfeld's most glorified beauty, dressed here alone. It was decided that I should share her glory.

We were a harmonious couple. Between Dorothy and me there was neither jealousy nor competition. For Dorothy, it was not enough, walking across the stage dressed in little except her breathless beauty and divine smile. Although her screen tests had been unsuccessful, she still yearned to become a movie star and took lessons in acting and dancing towards that end. For me, after dancing with Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn and Martha Graham, my little dances in the Follies were not enough. In May at Paramount under Herbert Brenon's direction, I had played with no enthusiasm a bit part in *The Street of Forgotten Men*. I wanted to be a show girl and do nothing. My moment of delight came at the end of the Follies when the whole company came on stage for the finale. Will Rogers and I climbed a ladder to the top of a fifteen foot tower set in the middle of the stage. Starting with a tiny noose on his lasso, Rogers would twirl it faster and faster, bigger and bigger until the rope hissed in a circle around us like an intoxicated snake as the curtains opened and the dazzling spotlight shone upon us.

The fifth floor dressing-room lost its exclusive atmosphere when Peggy Fears, who had also transferred from *Louie* to the Follies, decided to become my best friend. She was a darling girl, with a sweet singing voice, from Dallas, Texas. Her smooth chestnut-coloured hair was untouched by dyes or permanent waves. Instead of the expensive gowns of a Follies girl, she wore schoolgirl sweaters and skirts. Perhaps it was her whimsical sense of fun that attracted her to me. And what could be more fun than Peggy, the most popular girl in the show, becoming friends with its most abominated member—me? One night she crashed our dressing-room carrying a Wedgwood teapot full of corn whisky and, knowing my literary pretensions, two disgustingly vulgar magazines—*Broadway Brevities* and *The Police Gazette*. A week later we were living together in the Gladstone Hotel off Park Avenue, where swarmed Peggy's friends until September when she went on tour with the Follies and I went into *The American Venus* at Paramount's Long Island studio.

It was through Peggy Fears that I came to

know Bill Fields. Before the matinee, at the Rosary Florist, she would select a bouquet to be wrapped in waxed paper and presented to Bill in his dressing-room. It touched his heart. Bill adored beautiful girls but few were invited to his dressing-room. He was morbidly sensitive about the skin disease which inflamed his nose and sometimes erupted on his hands, making it necessary for him to learn to juggle wearing gloves. After several devastating experiences with beautiful girls he had decided to restrict his choice of girl friends to those less attractive whom he would not find adrift with saxophone players.

Bill entertained Peggy and me with distinction. His bar was an open wardrobe trunk fitted with shelves, planted, as if it were an *objet d'art*, beside his chair. While Shorty, the silent dwarf who was his valet and assistant on the stage, went about preparing our drinks, Peggy and I would dance around Bill who sat at his make-up shelf, listening to our nonsense with gracious attention.

I have never loved and laughed at W. C. Fields in films as I loved and laughed at him in the theatre. There are three reasons. First, in the theatre he was a make-believe character playing in a make-believe world. In films he was a real character acting in real stories. On the stage the crafty idiocy with which he attempted to extricate himself from ludicrous situations was unbelievably funny. The same idiocy attending the same situations on the screen gave his 'real' character sometimes a degraded, often a cruel and destructive quality.

Every night at the Follies, standing in the wings, I would watch Bill's *Bedroom Sketch* with Edna Leedom, and his *Picnic Sketch* with Ray Dooley.

The *Bedroom Sketch* opens in darkness. Bill and Edna are asleep in a double bed facing the audience. On Bill's side is a lamp on a night table; on Edna's side is a telephone on a night table. The telephone rings. Bill turns on the lamp, gets out of bed, sodden with sleep, his hair on end, wearing rumpled old white pyjamas. He trots round the bed in his little pink feet to answer the telephone. After mumbling a few words he says, 'Goodnight, Elmer.' Then looking down at Edna, who neither moves nor speaks, he adds, 'That was Elmer.' Bill turns out the light and gets back into bed. The telephone rings again. This time when Bill says, 'That was Elmer,' Edna sits up in a fury. She is lovely. Her blonde hair is in perfect order and her lace nightgown exposes her lovely bosom and arms. Her anger does not hide the merriment in her eyes and the dimples in her cheeks. While they fight over the identity of Elmer, nobody in the audience is expected to believe that Edna is Bill's jealous wife. The film *International House* (1933) contains a bedroom sequence played by Bill in the same old white pyjamas with another lovely blonde in an exquisite nightgown—Peggy Hopkins Joyce. But the realistic distaste with which she regards Bill spoils the fun.

In the Follies, Bill, as the father, played the *Picnic Sketch* with Ray Dooley as his small daughter. At that time, although Ray was twenty-eight with two children of her own, she had the face of an infant monkey and a body that fitted nicely into a baby carriage. Her squalling brats from two to six were brilliant travesties. She was not the

usual aggressive child of the theatre. Up to the moment of an outburst she was a passive child following Bill's operations, her eyes glazed with anxiety. Making no sound she watched him break in the door of the unoccupied house upon whose lawn was spread the litter of the picnic lunch. He burst into the house outraged to find the door locked against honest tax-paying Americans, and came out in triumph with a paper bag filled with stolen food. It was not until he opened the can of tomatoes with a hatchet, squirting the red juice in his face, that she set up the howls which made him flinch and recoil and grab at his hat.

As the traditional obnoxious brat, a little boy, Mickey Bennett, played Ray Dooley's part in the picnic sequence of the film, *It's the Old Army Game* (1926). It was shot on the front lawn of the most lavish estate in Palm Beach, El Mirasol, the winter home of a J. P. Morgan partner, Edward Stotesbury. Not only was it the most improbable spot for a Fields picnic, but what the production unit did to the lawn was frightful. During the five days of shooting the litter converted it to a garbage dump; and when the trucks and forty pairs of feet finished their work it looked like the abandoned site of an old soldiers' reunion. But Mr. and Mrs. Stotesbury were thrilled. 'Everybody,' said Mrs. Stotesbury, 'everybody in Palm Beach is driving by to see what is going on here!' I was not in the sequence so she invited me to tea inside the villa. After I autographed a photograph for her young granddaughter whose name was also Louise Brooks, Mr. Stotesbury, a teetery but spry little man of seventy-seven, dressed in the costume of an 18th-century dandy, took me up to his library where he entertained me with a short concert on the drums.

My second reason for preferring Fields on the stage to Fields on the screen is that on the stage the audience saw all of him all the time. In 1925 when I was shooting *The American Venus* and he *Sally of the Sawdust*, I would go to his set to watch him work. He paid no attention to camera set-ups. For each shot he would rehearse the same business to exasperating perfection while Carol Dempster and D. W. Griffith sat bored and limp in chairs beside the camera. Long shot, medium shot, two shot or close-up, Bill performed in each as if he were standing whole before an audience which could appreciate every detail of his costume and follow the dainty disposition of his hands and feet. Every time the camera drew closer it cut off another piece of him and deprived him of some comic effect.

Petrouchka is a comical marionette in Stravinsky's ballet until the very end when only his face is seen peering over the roof-top and the curtains close on a tragic note. Fields called Charlie Chaplin a 'ballet dancer', never deigning to study his film technique.

Having thousands of feet of close shots at his disposal, the film editor supplies my third reason for loving the stage Fields more than the film Fields. He never really left the theatre. As he ignored camera set-ups, he ignored the cutting room and he could only curse the finished film, seeing his timing ruined by haphazard cuts.

William LeBaron was responsible for attempting to divert Fields from fantasy to realism.



Top: Fields and Peggy Hopkins Joyce in 'International House'. Left: Louise Brooks, 'The American Venus'. Above: It's the Old Army Game', picnic on the Stokesbury lawn.

Today it is assumed that Fields was a big box-office star in the theatre and in films. He was not. The largest audience he attracted was the radio audience of 1937-38 which listened to his unedited dialogue with another creature of the imagination, Edgar Bergen's dummy, Charlie McCarthy. But back in 1925 LeBaron believed that Fields could never achieve complete success without

becoming a real person to the audience. Producing Marion Davies' films for William Randolph Hearst, LeBaron almost brought Marion to life in *When Knighthood was in Flower* (1922). With *Little Old New York* (1923), he produced her first hit in which, dressed in boy's clothes, she acted like a real girl. After seeing Fields play successfully a character part in the musical *Poppy*, LeBaron

gave him a part in Marion's film *Janice Meredith* (1924). When he went to Paramount, he put Fields under contract. Between 1925 and 1938 LeBaron produced twenty-one Fields films. Yet it was only after Fields escaped realism and returned to his world of make-believe that he made his best films at Universal from 1938 to 1941. This is a puzzling fact considering that

LeBaron produced all the exhilarant Mae West fantasies at Paramount, managing to neutralise her schemes to portray a *real* femme fatale, or, as Fields put it, 'a plumber's idea of Cleopatra'.

The first of five Fields films directed by Edward Sutherland was *It's the Old Army Game*. To shoot exteriors at the end of February 1926, Paramount sent the production unit to Ocala, an inland farming town in Florida. About six miles away was Silver Springs—'150 natural springs issuing from the porous Ocala limestone and flowing into a common basin. At eighty feet objects at the bottom are clearly visible.' The basin was filled with tropical fish, surrounded by tropical plants and flowers. This iridescent beauty was viewed from a glass-bottomed motor boat which Sutherland used for a love scene between William Gaxton and me.

The citizens of Ocala, hoping to make Silver Springs a rich tourist attraction, welcomed our company as a means of publicising their project. We were treated to so much Southern hospitality that the script got lost and the shooting schedule wandered out of sight. Nobody in Ocala seemed to have heard of Prohibition. And if ever there was a company that needed no help in the consumption of liquor, it was ours. Eddie Sutherland and Tom Geraghty (the writer) drank; William Gaxton, Blanche Ring, myself, the crew—everyone drank. Bill Fields drank his private stock apart with his girl friend, Bessie Poole, his manager, Billy Grady, and his valet, Shorty. We were a week over schedule, LeBaron was wiring 'All second cameraman's rushes tilted. What are you doing? Come home.', when Eddie decided that the picnic sequence absolutely must be shot on Mrs. Stotesbury's lawn.

Palm Beach was especially attractive that year because its millionaires decided that they absolutely could not get through the winter without their Follies girls. They provided Ziegfeld with the money to produce *Palm Beach Nights*, a small edition of the Follies. It was housed in an old assembly hall transformed into a night club with a full stage by the famous Viennese designer, Joseph Urban. Ziegfeld provided a choice selection of Follies girls including Paulette Goddard and Susan Flemming. And now every night, at the conclusion of *Palm Beach Nights*, our company (minus Bill Fields) contributed a floor show. Blanche Ring sang 'Rings on my Fingers', Mickey Bennett sang ballads in a piercing tenor, I danced, Eddie Sutherland did prat falls, and Billy Gaxton starred as the comedian. He and Rudy Cameron did their old vaudeville act, singing and dancing and telling bum jokes with violent self-approval. Then Gaxton appeared alone playing the violin. This was even worse than the vaudeville act. Trying to recapture the essence of Gaxton's impromptu comedy, I realise now that it was born of despair because he was funny every day too. When we did not work he was funny reading *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* to me; when we worked he was funny about his make-up, always checking with the cameraman, Alvin Wyckoff, to see whether the scar on the back of his neck was well covered since 'That's all anyone sees of me.'

I knew that our parts as the 'love interest' in a Fields comedy meant nothing, but Gaxton had convinced himself that this first job in films would launch him on a successful

new career allowing him to escape from years of mediocre vaudeville sketches. At best it was a mistaken act of friendship, Eddie's giving the part of a boy to a sophisticated actor of thirty-four. Billy Gaxton was so vulnerable, so proud of his good looks, his Spanish ancestry, his acting ability. When he became a great Broadway star in George Gershwin's *Of Thee I Sing* (1931), the deadly bitterness of this failure was exposed by the fact that he refused fabulous contracts, never making another film.

Not having seen *It's the Old Army Game*, I know only that it did not make money. In 1927 when Eddie Sutherland directed his second Fields comedy, *Tillie's Punctured Romance*, Paramount's Long Island studio was closed, LeBaron had gone to FBO, and Fields was finishing his contract at the Hollywood studio. I was married to Eddie during the preparation and production of *Tillie*, which was the worst mess of filmmaking that I have ever observed. Even Fields, who ordinarily did not enter the picture until shooting began, came to our house one afternoon to look into the story as it was told to him by Eddie and the writer, Monte Brice. I remember Bill sitting quietly listening and drinking martinis from Eddie's two-quart cocktail shaker; I remember him teasing me by dropping my fragile Venetian wine glasses and catching them just before they hit the floor; but I can't remember one word he said about the idiotic plot contrived for the remake of the film.

Mack Sennett's *Tillie's Punctured Romance* had been a box-office hit in 1914 due to the presence of Charlie Chaplin and Mabel Normand. The title and the story had no value in 1927 when Paramount (which had bought all of Sennett's properties) sold the rights, along with the services of Fields and Sutherland, to Al and Charlie Christie. The Christie brothers had been making the popular Christie Comedies since 1916. They were kind, big men nearing fifty when the film corporations established the controlling theatre chains which eliminated the Christies' two-reel comedies as they eliminated Sennett's. Temporary insanity, brought on by the prospect of losing their company, their studio, and their Beverly Hills mansion, induced them to produce the six-reel *Tillie* with a Paramount release. It was filmed with groans, previewed with moans, shown in a few theatres and then buried in the vaults. Poor old *Tillie* had not a single mourner.

After a famous person dies his biographers feel free to give him a glittering list of intimate friends. Anecdotes are so much tastier spiced with expensive names. Bill Fields' list grows with every telling. So far as I know he had no intimate friends and loved only one person whose name, Paul Jones, is meaningless to practically everyone.

Paul Meredith Jones was born in 1897 in Bristol, Tennessee, a mountain village on the Kentucky border. In 1922 he turned up at the Paramount studio and got a job as a prop boy. In 1962, when he retired from that studio, he left behind one of the finest records of a comedy producer known to Hollywood history. He had produced comedies with Bing Crosby and Bob Hope, with Hope alone; with Martin and Lewis, with Jerry Lewis alone; with Danny Kaye and W. C. Fields.

Paul was still an assistant director when LeBaron returned to Paramount in 1931 and began to groom him as a comedy producer. Although LeBaron was tall and grey and elegant and Paul was a small sandy-haired hillbilly, they had much in common. Both were serene, witty observers of the scene rather than participants, warm and friendly yet remote. Both were unpublished, unknown in Hollywood society. But, whereas LeBaron functioned above the storm, he could send Paul to any set where insecure comedians were fighting with insecure comedy directors, and obtain peace.

Fields, Eddie and I first knew Paul when he was the second assistant on *It's the Old Army Game*. His walk alone, the way he came on the set as if he had ambled down the mountain to make a friendly call, was as soothing as a lullaby. Leaning on his cane, as relaxed as if he were leaning over a rail fence, his narrow eyes twinkling in his long solemn face, he would listen to Bill and Eddie argue about the direction of a scene until they ran out of words. Then with some easy comforting remarks he would make them feel just silly enough to laugh at themselves. When it came time to shoot the scene the argument had settled itself—usually in Bill's favour.

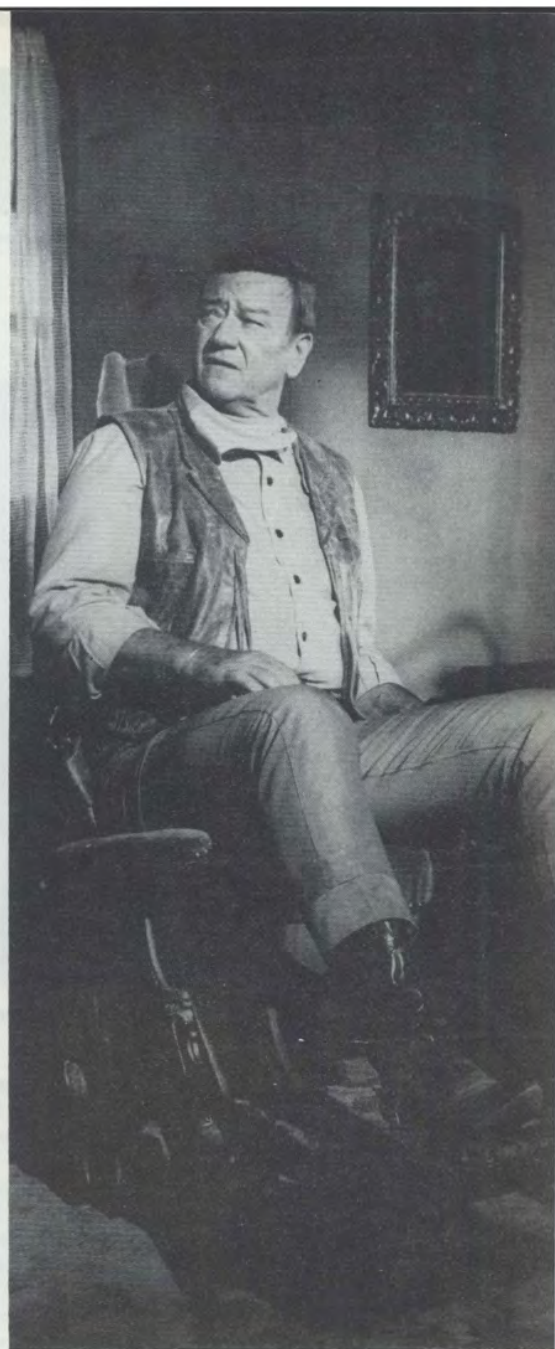
Paul became first assistant on *Tillie's Punctured Romance*. That is when he became Fields' confidant. They had a bond. Women. Paul too adored beautiful girls who did not adore him. His handicap was his total distinction. He did not look or act or talk like anyone in Hollywood. Young girls were ashamed to go out with 'that little hillbilly'. He had fallen in love with a pretty extra girl, Doris Hill, and persuaded Eddie to give her a part in *Tillie*. During production she met Monte Brice and married him.

The last time I saw Paul was at his home in 1940. He had become a powerful and wealthy producer without changing a bit. He was married to his pleasant secretary, Julia, and they were living in an old-fashioned bungalow on an unfashionable street in Hollywood. I was soon to leave Hollywood for ever and Paul's stories and imitations of Bill Fields are the last happy memories I possess of that unhappy place. Especially Bill's plot to get rid of Bessie Poole. Bessie was a large, plump blonde who wore ruffled pink organdie dresses with matching hat, gloves, shoes and parasol. Her composure was indestructible. All Bill's suggestions that she should leave him for her own good were deflected with smiling contentment. Not being a cruel man, or a brave one, he designed a painless separation by means of a fictional business trip, taking Paul with him to San Francisco. Bessie saw them off, waving goodbye with her pink handkerchief to Bill and Paul standing on the observation platform of the train. All the time Bill was waving and beaming and calling goodbye to Bessie he was muttering his horrid plot into Paul's ear. When they arrived in San Francisco he would telephone his lawyer in Hollywood, instructing him to present a generous cheque to Bessie and stuff her on the first train back to New York and the burlesque show. Paul knew, of course, that Fields would never have the courage to carry out the plot which seemed so feasible as the train was pulling out and he was calling, 'Goodbye Bessie, goodbye my dear—my little rosebud. Take care of yourself.' ■



'DO I GET TO PLAY THE DRUNK THIS TIME?'

An
encounter
with
Howard
Hawks



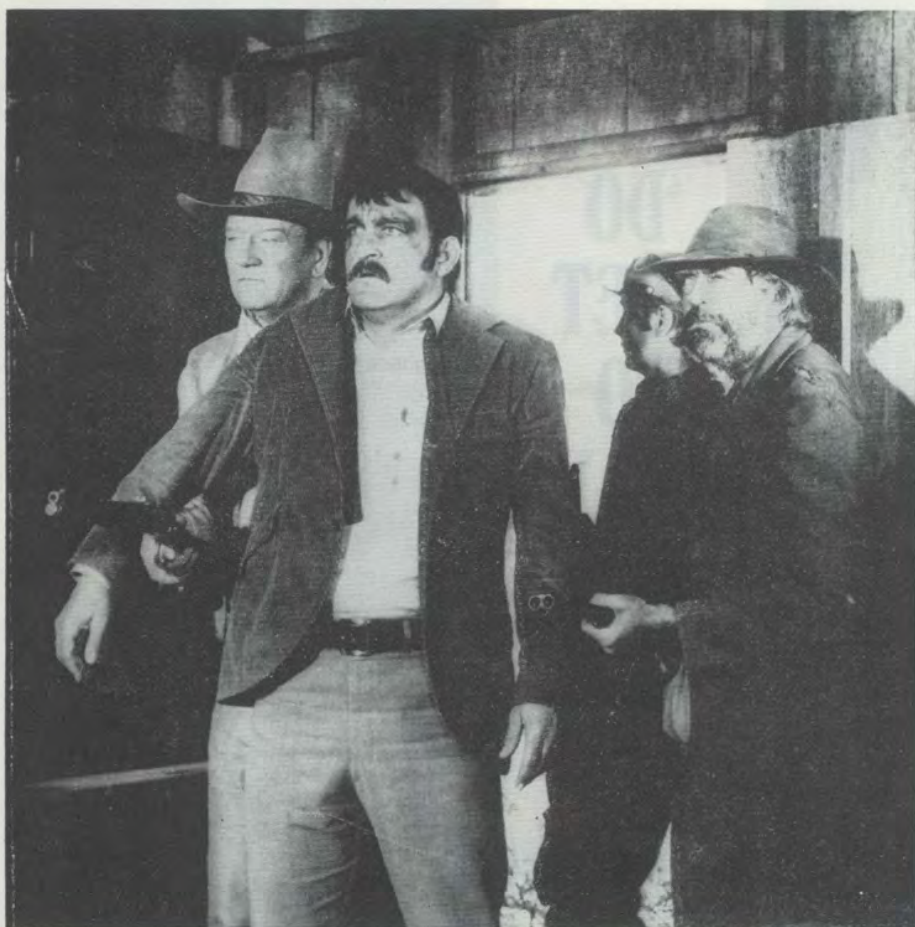
He is approaching 75, but Howard Hawks still fits the old Ben Hecht description of him as 'a drawling fashion plate, apurr with melodrama.' On the stage of the Carnegie Theater for the Chicago Film Festival last November, a month before the premiere of his *Rio Lobo*, he was the image of the consummate professional. He was wearing rimless dark glasses, and kept them on even when the audience, through an electrician's error, was left in darkness. As he sat there in the spotlight, asking for light, it seemed oddly appropriate—recalling Robin Wood's words about 'the eternal darkness . . . against which the Hawksian stoicism shines.'

The lights came on again, and Hawks stoically endured a long eulogy by Charles Flynn, editor of *Focus!* magazine. Flynn closed with, 'Unless Mr. Hawks wants to say something at the end . . .' Hawks, visibly grimacing, replied, 'I think you've said more than enough,' and from that point on the audience was his. Hawks kept the talk going by quietly nodding at each new questioner, quickly asking for repetition if a question confused him, and beguiling the audience with a flow of anecdotes. Some were familiar, but he embellished them with new twists and flourishes, just as his heroes repeat the same tasks in an endless but volatile routine until they achieve an almost effortless mastery. When a particularly obtuse question came up—such as one which criticised his direction of Henry Hathaway's *The Sons of Katie Elder*, or another which asked where to obtain a 'Red River D Belt buckle'—he would field it gracefully, with a barely perceptible irritation. What follows is an edited transcript of his remarks, rearranged by topic.

JOSEPH MCBRIDE AND MICHAEL WILMINGTON

Is the story of *Rio Lobo* similar to *El Dorado*, as *El Dorado* was similar to *Rio Bravo*?

Well, when we came to a certain place in *Rio Bravo*, we had a choice between going in this direction and going in that direction. But we made notes to remember because we said, 'That is so good we can use it again.' So when we started on *El Dorado*, I said to the writer, the same one who worked on *Rio Bravo* [Leigh Brackett], 'Now, look, we had a very good boy gunman in *Rio Bravo*, let's make it a boy who can't shoot at all.' That wasn't the same, was it? I said, 'John Wayne was the sheriff in *Rio Bravo*, so let's have Bob Mitchum the sheriff in *El Dorado*.' You're right, there is a similarity, but it comes from style, it comes from writing, it comes from the fact that it's made in the same part of the country, because the costumes are very much the same . . . *Rio Lobo* is quite different because it starts in the war between the North and the South, so you don't quite think it's going to be a Western, then it changes to the Western. You can probably say that Western is a lot like the other two. Sure. You've got fellows with guns, and



'You've got fellows with guns and one of them's a sheriff . . . ' John Wayne, Victor French and Jack Elam in 'Rio Lobo'

one of them's a sheriff . . . You know, there isn't much you can do.

What kind of working relationship do you have with John Wayne?

The last picture we made, I called him up and said, 'Duke, I've got a story.' He said, 'I can't make it for a year, I'm all tied up.' And I said, 'Well, that's all right, it'll take me a year to get it finished.' He said, 'Good, I'll be all ready.' And he came down on location and he said, 'What's this about?' And I told him the story. He never even

read it, he didn't know anything about it.

Didn't it sound familiar to him, though?

Yes, he said, 'Do I get to play the drunk this time?'

El Dorado seems to start out in a very sombre vein and then loosen up toward the middle.

That's a particular theory of mine, that if people start a picture and they have a funny main title, a lot of funny things, it's as much as to say, 'We expect you to laugh.' I think

that's committing suicide. So I start out and try to get their attention with a good dramatic sequence, and then find a place to start getting some laughs. We did that with *Rio Bravo*, we did that with *El Dorado*, and we did it very much with the new picture. It starts off being *very* serious and then before the audience realises it, you're starting in having some fun.

Could you explain how *Rio Bravo* was made as a reaction against *High Noon*?

I saw *High Noon* at about the same time I saw another Western picture, and we were talking about Western pictures and they asked me if I liked it and I said, 'Not particularly.' I didn't think a good sheriff was going to go running around town like a chicken with his head off asking for help. I said that a good sheriff would turn around and say, 'How good are you? Are you good enough to take the best man they've got?' And the fellow would probably say 'No' and he'd say, 'Well, then I'd just have to take care of you.' And that scene was in *Rio Bravo*. Then I saw another picture where the sheriff caught a prisoner and the prisoner taunted him and made him perspire and worry and everything by saying, 'Wait till my friends catch up with you.' And I said, 'That's a lot of nonsense, the sheriff would say, "You better hope your friends *don't* catch up with you, 'cause you'll be the first man to die." While we were doing all this, they said, 'Why don't you make a picture the other way?' And I said 'O.K.', and we made *Rio Bravo* the exact opposite from *High Noon* and this other picture—I think it was called *3:10 to Yuma*.

What sort of stories would you like to do in the future?

Cary Grant and I were talking the other day, we'd always wanted to do *Don Quixote* and have Cantinflas do Sancho Panza. Before Cary gets too old or I get too old, we hope to do it. Outside of that, any story that I think's fun to do, I expect to do. Things are changing so rapidly now that I like to know what they're beginning to think. I talked to an exhibitor the other day and he said booking a picture today is like playing Russian roulette.

How would you attempt to do such a complex philosophical work as *Don Quixote*?

I think we could have a lot of fun with it. To me, *Don Quixote* is a great comedy. I think that *Don Quixote* is the basis really for the Chaplin character. I think we all found that funny, and I don't see why we can't make *Don Quixote* very funny.

Is there any chance of *Scarface* being redistributed?

We're working on it. We think we'll probably re-release it and send it out for television. I'm trying to get it ready and modernise it a little bit. The picture holds up very well, but some of the music and some of the stuff that the censors made us put in at that time I'd rather not leave in, so we're taking that out of it.

I have a very hard time convincing people that *Red Line 7000* is a great film. How do you feel about it?

I don't like it. I was trying to do something, I tried an experiment. I had three good stories about the race track—I used to race, I know it pretty well—but none of them would make a picture, so I thought maybe I can put them together. And just



'The role of women is seen to be subservient and auxiliary . . . ' May McAvoy in 'The Road to Glory'

when I got people interested in two people, I cut over and started to work with two more, and when the audience got interested in them, I went over to two others, and pretty soon the audience got disgusted and I got disgusted too. To be serious, I think there were some pretty good things in it, but as a piece of entertainment I don't think I did a good job. I think there were some individual scenes that were pretty good, and there were a lot of great race scenes. But I'm not proud of the picture as a whole.

On a movie such as *Hatari!*, it's obvious that you can't control much of what's going to happen. Could you explain how you prepared for the hunting scenes?

We had some marvellous camera cars—sixth months building, could do about 80 miles an hour over no roads—and a pretty well-trained crew. And we had airplanes spotting up above that had radio connection with the cars. We had around fifty jeeps of various kinds: little jeeps, station wagons, everything. I could talk to the airplanes, and I could talk to the cars. An airplane would say, 'Car 33 is headed for a good bunch of rhinos.' So I'd say, 'Where's car 33?' They put up a flag, and we'd find out where 33 was, and we'd all head for 33. And then we'd hear a voice say, 'Be careful when you swing round that bunch of trees, they're right behind there and they look kinda mean.' And then you'd hear, 'Look out there!' and a big crash, and the boys in the airplane would say, 'I told you they were mean.' Then we'd make a scene—we only had three or four minutes to make a whole scene. We had to catch them and get 'em into a cage. Three or four minutes was a long time, because they weren't fun. I think we chased nine rhinos and caught four to get the scenes in this part of the picture.

How much control do you have over the editing of your films?

Oh, practically complete control. I've had a little trouble on a couple of pictures that they thought were too long. I made the mistake of making them too long and they made the mistake of trying to shorten them.

Is there one of your films that stands out as being particularly satisfying to you?

I don't think you can answer that question. You make a comedy—you take it out, if the people laugh, you're immediately pleased, you get an immediate reaction and the pleasure that you've done a good job. If you make a drama, it takes a little bit longer. You have to have people come up to you and say, 'I enjoyed that', because they can give you no visible expression in a theatre. Oh, if they don't walk out, that's pretty good. I think probably the last picture that worked out well is your favourite for a while, and then you start thinking about it and you go back a little further. Not that you're trying to make every scene a great scene, but you try not to annoy the audience. If I can make about five good scenes and not annoy the audience, it's an awfully good picture. I told John Wayne when we started to work together, 'Duke, if you can make two good scenes and not annoy the audience for the rest of the film, you'll be a star.' So he always comes up to me and says, 'Is this one of those not-annoy-the-audience...?' And I say, 'You better believe it.' Or he says, 'Is this one of our good ones?' And I say, 'Well,



Cary Grant, Katharine Hepburn in 'Bringing Up Baby'

this is almost that...' We work that way, and now he preaches that as though it's gospel, and he does a great job of not annoying the audience.

Would you say something about your use of colour?

When we were making *Red River*, we discussed whether to use colour or not. At that time colour wasn't very good. It had a kind of garish look to it. I didn't like it, and we were trying to get a feeling of the period, so we made *Red River* in black-and-white. Some things I think go well in black-and-white; they give you a feeling of being older. Now colour is better, and it'd be pretty hard for me to make a picture without colour. I think I enjoy it now. We've learned how to handle it, to control it, to print it. The colour is faster, so we can use it just as if we were using black-and-white; it doesn't jump at us. We can use all the fall colours, ambers and muted colours, and come out with a very good-looking picture. On *El Dorado*, I noticed that the Remington paintings always had a great slash of light across the street coming out of the saloon door. So I said to the cameraman, 'How do we get that?' He said, 'Use yellow light, but don't walk your people through it—they'll look like they had yellow jaundice or something.' He used back light on them and it was a very mellow, pleasant look. We used it in the last picture.

What kind of relationship do you like to have with your cameraman?

Elsa Martinelli, John Wayne in 'Hatari!'



There's a lot of cooperation with a good cameraman, and I've been fortunate in having good ones. Some of them get very tired of working in normal stuff, they relax and then you pep them up and get them to take chances. I tell them, 'If you make two good scenes for me, you can make two mediocre ones and one bad one.' All I'm interested in is the good one. So they go ahead and take chances, and their work shows it. Because you people pass up the bad scenes, but you really appreciate the good one.

Could you say something about the way you improvise with actors, how many liberties you're willing to take with a scene?

A lot of that has been overemphasised. We have a scene that we're going to do: I'm interested first in the action and next in the words they speak. If I can't make the action good, I don't try to use the words. If I want something to happen in a hurry, I can't have a man stop and read a line. I let him run on through yelling something. I must change to fit the action because, after all, it's a motion picture. I don't change it so much—we end up with the same scene, except we just do it in a little different style.

I recently saw *Tiger Shark* and I was amazed by Edward G. Robinson's performance. It seems so much better than what he did in *Little Caesar*.

When we started that picture, it was written as a very dour, sour man. At the end of the first day I said to Eddie Robinson, 'This is going to be the dullest picture that's ever been made.' And he said, 'What can we do?' I said, 'Well, if you're willing to try it with me, why, let's make him a happy-go-lucky, talkative... you're going to have to keep talking all through the picture.' He said, 'Fine, let's do it.' So every day I give him a sheet of yellow paper and say, 'Here's your lines.' He's a fine actor, and I thought he did a great job. But I hate to think of what the picture would have been if we'd done the dour, sour man instead of this rather gay, futile man, because the whole tenor of the picture changed.

Could you tell us something about the off-camera lives of people like Bogart and Cagney?

I had enough trouble with them on the set to worry about.

How do you handle difficult actors?

Look, if they're good, they're no trouble to handle. The only people that are hard to handle are bad actors. I had trouble the first day with Bogart. I think I grabbed him by the lapels and pushed his head up against the wall and said, 'Look, Bogie, I tell you how to get tough, but don't get tough with me.' He said, 'I won't.' Everything was fine from that time on.

Do you pick the scripts you work on?

I get complete opportunity to pick the script. There are only a few times that I've done a favour for somebody and made a picture, and usually it hasn't been good because I know the kind of a story I can tell and that I enjoy telling. Then it's fun.

Could you explain how the day-to-day writing goes on a script?

Well, when Hecht and MacArthur and I used to work on a script, we'd sit in a room and work for two hours and then we'd play backgammon for an hour. Then we'd start again and one of us would be one character

and one would be another character. We'd read our lines of dialogue and the whole idea was to try to stump the other people, to see if they could think of something crazier than you could. And that is the kind of dialogue we used, and the kind that was fun. We could usually remember what we said, and put it right down and go on working. And sometimes you're so far in a picture, and you get an idea that you're going to change a character, so you just go back and change the lines that you've written for that character and start all over again.

One of the best known lines in American films is, 'If you want anything, just whistle' in *To Have and Have Not*. Who was responsible—Faulkner, Furthman, Hawks, or was it improvised?

I was making a test of Bacall, so I wrote the scene just for the test and it went over so well we had an awful time trying to put it into the picture. Faulkner was the one who found a place to put it. He said, 'If we put these people in a hotel corridor where nobody else is around, then I think we can make that scene work.' So we did it. I wrote the line, but he wrote the stuff that led up to it. Bill and I were very good friends. We hunted and fished a lot. I bought the first story that he sold; he was working as a clerk in Macy's basement in New York. He worked with me on, oh, half a dozen pictures. I could call on him any time and ask him for a scene, and he always gave it to me.

Could you tell us something about *Land of the Pharaohs*?

We had a lot of fun, and we had a pretty good premise of a story. For writers we had Bill Faulkner and Harry Kurnitz, a very fine playwright. We started to work on it, and Faulkner said, 'I don't know how a pharaoh talks.' I said, 'Well, I don't know, I never talked to one.' And he said, 'Is it all right if I write him like a Kentucky colonel?' And Kurnitz said, 'I can't do it like a Kentucky colonel, but I'm a student of Shakespeare—I think I could do it as though it were *King Lear*.' So I said, 'Well, you fellows go ahead and I'll rewrite your stuff.' They did it, and I messed it up, and . . . we didn't know what a pharaoh did.

The dialogue in your films is very sophisticated. Have you ever found the Production Code restrictive?

Oh, no. We made one picture, *Big Sleep*, and they read the script and they didn't care for the end Chandler wrote. I said, 'Why don't you suggest a better one?' And they did. It was a lot more violent, it was everything I wanted, and I made it and was very happy about it. I said, 'I'll hire you fellows as writers.'

What things do you think you have in common with John Ford?

A great deal. He was a good director when I started, and I copied him every time I could. I don't think I've done nearly as good a job as Ford on some things. I think he's got the greatest vision for a tableau, a long shot, of any man. One of my favourite pictures of all time is *The Quiet Man*, which I think was just a beautiful picture. Ford, oh, he has done some things that are just fabulous. And he was the first man to do them. Every time I run into a scene that I think Ford does very well, I stop and think, 'What would he have done there?' And then I go ahead and do it, because he gets more use out of a bad sky . . . he goes right on shooting

whether the weather's bad or good, and he gets fabulous effects. I was making a picture with Wayne, *Red River*. We had a burial scene, and the cameraman said, 'We'd better hurry, there's a cloud coming across that mountain right behind.' So I said to Wayne, 'Now, look, you go out there—if you forget your lines, just say anything, keep talking until I tell you to come on in. We'll make the sound afterwards.' And I waited until the cloud got near, thought of Ford, and started the scene. Then we started the burial service, and the cloud passed right over the whole scene. I told Ford. I said, 'Hey, I've made one almost as good as you can do. You better go and see it.'

Could you comment on your earliest films?

A very astute and wise man gave me a chance to direct, and I made a picture [*The Road to Glory*, 1926] that I don't think anybody enjoyed except a few critics. And he said, 'Look, you've shown you can make a picture, but for God's sake go out and make entertainment.' So I went home and wrote a story about Adam and Eve waking up in the Garden of Eden and called it *Fig Leaves*. It got its cost back in one theatre. And that taught me a very good lesson; from that time on, I've been following his advice about trying to make entertainment.

You're famous for taking a scene that has elements of pain and humiliation, such as the finger amputation in *The Big Sky* or the steak scene in *Only Angels Have Wings*, and either playing it lightly or for outright slapstick . . .

You're looking for something new to be funny. I told John Wayne (on *Red River*), 'Look, I've got an idea for a funny scene. You get your finger caught between a saddle horn and a rope, and it's mangled, and they say, 'Well, that finger isn't going to be much use to you.' And they get you drunk and they heat up an iron in the fire and sharpen a knife and cut off your finger.' He said, 'What kind of a scene is that?' 'Oh,' I said, 'It's supposed to be funny.' He said, 'That isn't funny.' 'Oh,' I said, 'if you're not good enough, then we won't do it. I'll do it with somebody else who's a better actor.' So I did it with Kirk Douglas, and I told John, 'You better go see that picture.' And he came back and said, 'If you say a funeral is funny, I'll do a funeral.' Because I think that was a funny scene. I think that humour comes very close to being tragedy. In *Rio Bravo*, Wayne hit a fellow across the face the most horrible way. Dean Martin said, 'Hey, take it easy.' And Wayne said, 'I'm not gonna hurt him.' The audience thought it was funny. In *Rio Lobo*, we set a man on fire. He's burning and somebody goes to pick up a blanket to put the thing out, and Wayne says, 'Let him burn.' And the other fellow says, 'Don't let him burn so much he can't sign the papers we want him to sign.' And, I don't know, to me it was funny.

Pauline Kael attacked your films because she said they are examples of male chauvinism.

God, I don't know what that means.

That the role of women is seen to be subservient and auxiliary to the heroics of the men.

Well, I've seen so many pictures where the hero gets in the moonlight and says silly things to a girl. I'd reverse it and let the girl do the chasing around, you know, and

it works out pretty well. Anyway, I know that a little better than I do that other stuff.

You say you are an entertainer, and the French critics in the last few years have been treating you as an entertainer and a philosopher . . .

Oh, I listen to them, and I get open-mouthed and wonder where they find some of the stuff that they say about me. All I'm doing is telling a story. I'm very glad that they like it, and I'm very glad that a lot of them are copying what I do, but they find things . . . I work on the fact that if I like somebody and think they're attractive, I can make them attractive. If I think a thing's funny, then people laugh at it. They give me credit for an awful lot of things that I don't pay any attention to.

Your films always have a solid structure. But in today's films it almost seems unfashionable to have one . . .

If they let those fellows that are making them today go on with no structure, when they make the second or third picture I think they'll begin to learn that they better have a little structure. We made a picture that worked pretty well called *Big Sleep*, and I never figured out what was going on, but I thought that the basic thing had great scenes in it and it was good entertainment. After that got by, I said, 'I'm never going to worry about being logical again.' But I think that in some of today's pictures you don't know where you are, who's talking, or anything, and that's why they have got motion pictures lying around over in Hollywood that they can't make head or tail out of. I think a director's a story-teller, and if he tells a story that people can't understand, then he shouldn't be a director. You take the Western. Every time a man I know is a first-rate director goes after a Western, you come out with a pretty good picture, because a Western's good entertainment, it's dramatic . . . But you get somebody who's going to make a Western about a psycho or a left-handed gun or something like that, then it's no good, it doesn't live up to what people want in a Western.

What did you think of *The Wild Bunch*?

Somebody asked me about it, and I said, 'Well, he doesn't know how to direct. I can kill four men and bury 'em before he gets through using slow motion to make one die.' All I saw was a lot of red paint and blood running.

You're quite an inspiration for a lot of young European directors . . .

A number of them have a great deal of talent, but they're telling pictures that are good for only France, Italy and Germany. When I go over there I talk to them about it. I say, 'Why don't you fellows widen out, make a picture that is good for the world? You aren't going to get enough money to work with unless you get it out of universal entertainment.' And I think they're beginning to work on that. A couple of the Frenchmen do beautiful jobs, and I admire their work. Peter Bogdanovich, who made *Targets*, I think is eventually going to turn out some very fine work. Of the older directors, I admire Carol Reed's work very much. I like Hitchcock's work, and Billy Wilder's. When I think I can learn something, I go to see any of their pictures, but if I think I can't learn, I don't go. ■

Making Movies

Abraham Polonsky



Abraham Polonsky up a ladder while filming 'Romance of a Horse Thief'. Above: Serge Gainsbourg (centre), Yul Brynner and Lainie Kazan (above left).

Up to *Romance of a Horse Thief*, the film I have just finished, such images as I used in my movies originated in the eye, and whatever was visionary, however defined by memory, began with an event, not someone else's memory of an event. Of course, my memory of my memory of an event is already bogged down in the ritual of critical philosophy. Nevertheless, the images of *Romance of a Horse Thief* signify something beyond, because they come by way of the tales my grandmother told me, worked through the stories of the Opatoshus, father and son. It is her voice I hear all through the movie and it was her voice and her face which toured the locations at Vukovar, Ilok, Osijek, Djakovo and elsewhere in the northern plains of Yugoslavia where we established a Polish border town between Russia and Germany in the year 1904.

Even in *Tell Them Willie Boy Is Here* (Riverside, California 1909) the Cahuilla Indians were there before me. The times had altered them but they were there, and some had been present at the incident. And that was the landscape, and the places, and the very ranch house, and that orchard, and even an old man who knew that Willie had escaped to Mexico. The details which Harry Lawton had dug out of the old newspapers and from the records in Washington still existed in the events before us, before we made the movie.

But Vukovar, the Vuka River, the Danube,

the geese and swine and horses of the countryside, were not in fact Poland, not Malava, not anything like it directly. The Jews were dead except for one old lady who lent us her Sabbath candlesticks, her linen cloth, and her memories of Nazi terror. We were working by way of analogy and bit by bit I tried to crystallise that antic, continuously imaginary world with which my grandmother entertained me on those late Saturday afternoons when my parents brought me to stay overnight while they went off to watch the vaudeville on the Fox circuit.

I believed my grandmother lived in the city and we lived in the country, but in fact we both lived in New York City. However, it was that kind of journey which in a way her storytelling continued. Everything was imagination in her apartment, including my grandfather who spent his time smiling and praying at home or in the synagogue in a lifelong intimate murmuring with our God.

My grandmother was an atheist, a socialist, and a storyteller and, like her daily paper, believed in education. Each week *The Forward* printed an instalment and re-invented it for me. Once, it must have been Huckleberry Finn. I remember Jim as a powerful Russian serf, and Huck sailing down the Volga to freedom. My grandmother felt more at home with her own memories of Russian towns and neighbours, so she retranslated, and years later when I came to read the literature of the world I had the strangest sense of having met all of it before in my grandmother's Russian landscape.

Romance is a fairy tale, pretending to affect an older style but in fact the contrary. It is wrapped around and around with those old memories about a hard and chewy centre of the interminable now. We wandered into Yugoslavia looking for the past and found it somewhat surrealist in the present, but not hopeless. Yul Brynner, playing the Cossack commandant, created the bleakness of exile in himself long before the Jews went into their diaspora. The local band from Osijek, weary, sweaty, stagey in Polish peasant costumes, marched up and down in front of the museum converted into the Cossack barracks, and blew quarter-tones out of their instruments. On the Danube the sporting club zoomed up and down on outboards. Cranes, trains, tractors, cars, motorbikes, everything protested against our imagined past. We had a few adventures. The cameraman turned up the day before shooting. The camera sounded like a coffee grinder. There were no lights. We followed the sun. Everything and everyone was a little crazy. We used to walk out in the morning, take a look around and ask, what shall we remember today? Not a bad beginning. I could hear my grandmother's voice everywhere.

In this strange way *Romance of a Horse Thief* is attached closely to the films of my childhood long before I had heard of fine art. For me movies are irrevocably and richly rooted in kitsch, in childhood, in storytelling, in the rubbish of paperbacks and sitting under the streetlights while off in the zoo across the lots flowering with burdock, lions roared out their fantasy of freedom.

Now that movies are being moved into the fine arts and a serious occupation for Voices, it was those other voices, casual, inventive, bemused, remembering too, the voices of the Opatoshus, my grandmother, and that enchanting continuously unrolling film refreshed by a weekly visit to the moviehouse which I wanted to hear in *Romance*. So the camera is transparent, just there, like clear water to let the fiction of the *I* see through, yet somehow like consciousness biased and bent.

It was a great pleasure to make a movie again. Nothing is better; perhaps revolution, but there you have to succeed and be right, dangers which never attach themselves to making movies, and dreaming.

Film REVIEWS

Little Big Man

The American West has inspired an astonishingly small body of significant fiction, and Thomas Berger's 1964 picaresque masterpiece *Little Big Man* is among its few peaks. The novel continues a popular tradition of vernacular writing and frontier tall-story telling while at the same time being in tone and form very typical of the highly self-conscious American fiction of the past twenty years. The 111-year-old narrator Jack Crabb fell into the hands of the Cheyenne as a child, was brought up as the Indian Brave 'Little Big Man' by the wise Old Lodge Skins, and subsequently spent his life drifting around the West, mediating between the oppressed Indians and the intruding pale-faces, performing a series of standard frontier roles (storekeeper, cavalry scout, gunfighter, gambler, railroad worker, buffalo hunter, etc.), associating with legendary figures like Calamity Jane, Wyatt Earp, Wild Bill Hickok, General Custer (whom he attempts to murder), and being present at numerous historical occasions, most crucially the massacre of the Indians at Washita in 1868 (as an Indian) and the defeat of the Seventh Cavalry at the Little Big Horn in 1876, of which action he was the sole white survivor. His name suggests his sideways passage through American history; his story, in contemporary fashion, is framed by a foreword and epilogue attributed to the prissy historian Ralph Fielding Snell (the middle name like the 'Crabb' is no accident), who recorded it at a Senior Citizens' Home in 1952 and proclaims Crabb 'either the most neglected hero in the history of this country or a liar of insane proportions.'

Director Arthur Penn and his screenwriter Calder Willingham clearly respect their literary source in *Little Big Man* (Fox), and though they have had to cut a good deal and have transposed and telescoped certain episodes, what they've added has invariably been developed from lines and events in the novel. And they've tried—on the whole pretty successfully—to reproduce Berger's balance between authentic observation, social criticism, bizarre fantasy and mordant humour. Regrettably, they haven't seen fit to follow Berger's respect for the historical facts, an important element in the novel's framework; they have for instance Hickok dying some years before Custer, and the latter turning up in the West long before his actual appearance. More significantly, and despite an appealing performance by Dustin Hoffman, their Crabb is more like Candide than Berger's salty, foul-mouthed, hard-drinking plainsman. This is emphasised by building up two of the book's minor characters, the innocently lecherous Mrs. Pendrake (Faye Dunaway), wife of Crabb's adoptive preacher father, and the resilient, disintegrating con-man Allardyce T. Merriweather (Martin Balsam) into respectively a frontier Cunégonde and a Pangloss of the free enterprise system who challenges the sense of order Crabb learns from the Cheyenne and substitutes a notion of exploitable chaos. Nonetheless, these two figures are evidence of Willingham's understanding of Berger and of his own feeling as a novelist for the literary genre.

One can easily see what attracted Penn to

Berger's book: a *déraciné* hero zigzagging his way through America to find a home, the probing into the roots of American violence, and in particular the opportunity to confront the confusion of destructive, White Anglo-Saxon Protestant society with the organic culture of the Cheyenne, who call themselves 'the human beings'. Penn doesn't merely observe Indian life, with its humane sympathy for individuals, whimsical tolerance of 'contraries' (braves so dedicated that they live their lives backwards) and 'heemanehs' (homosexuals who live happily among the squaws), awareness of an all-embracing scheme of things, ritualised approach to violence and aggression, personal generosity and lack of the acquisitive drive. He also manages to capture the mood of this vulnerable, alien culture that's as different from our contemporary experience as life on Kurt Vonnegut's idealistic planet of Tralfamadore, which in some ways the Cheyenne camp resembles. And he embodies it in a magnificent performance of gentle humour and unaffected dignity by Chief Dan George as the benevolent Old Lodge Skins. This casting might well have been influenced by Jack Crabb's indignant observations on the impersonation of Indians by white actors in the TV films he'd seen in the Senior Citizens' Home.

In contrast to his treatment of the 'human beings', Penn presents white society largely in terms of caricature; in this respect as in others his film is rather like Arthur Kopit's play *Indians*. Life in so-called civilisation is disordered, hypocritical, self-seeking, nihilistic; people live in constant fear and tension and project their hatreds and insecurity on to their enemies. The opening shot of the narrative is a blood-stained body slumped surrealistically over a chaise longue in the middle of the prairie; when Bill Hickok eventually gets the long-awaited bullet in his back he dies without dignity, his chin resting on the boot of an unseen,

'Little Big Man': Custer (Robert Mulligan) at the Little Big Horn



indifferent, poker-playing companion. These are typical Penn images that recall the dead sheriff's boot left in the streets for kids to laugh at in *The Left-Handed Gun*. Another piece of pure Penn—in some ways a parody of the salt-flats fight in Ford's *Stagecoach*—is a wild stagecoach ride with pursuing Indians, orchestrated like *Bonnie and Clyde* to jangling Country and Western music. There's a bizarrely comic shot here of an arrow transfixing a preacher through a protective Bible.

The main burden of the destructive, death-seeking aspect of white society falls, not for the first time, on General George Armstrong Custer, portrayed by Robert Mulligan as a vainglorious psychopath with the chin-tilting, teeth-baring grin of the young Errol Flynn, who played Hollywood's noblest version of Custer in *They Died With Their Boots On* (1941). He lives by an insane personal logic and is given lines about 'poison from the gonads rising to the throat and moving around to certain muscles' that could have emerged from the lips of *Dr. Strangelove's* Jack D. ('Precious Bodily Fluids') Ripper. Admittedly this Custer, who goes raving mad at his Last Stand, comes out of Berger, but is not



'Little Big Man': Dustin Hoffman and Faye Dunaway

qualified by the charisma that could invite the complex response and grudging admiration of the novel's Jack Crabb. Moreover, the film begins with a reference in the prologue by the aged Crabb's interrogator to 'near genocide of the Indian'; and the treatment of Custer unfortunately tends to dilute the charge and exculpate American society by focusing attention on one crazy individual.

In a movie that contains much that is remarkable, two sequences deserve special mention. The first is the great set-piece of the massacre at Washita, which begins with the cavalry advancing dreamlike out of the snow-covered, mist-enshrouded landscape with the band playing the regimental march 'Garry Owen' (the Irish tune used as a key dramatic motif in *They Died With Their Boots On*). A feeling of two mutually uncomprehending and irreconcilable cultures in collision is caught superbly as Penn cuts between the implacable avenging soldiery and the confused, innocent community camped beside the river. Time is dislocated; beauty and butchery intermingle; political event and intimate dialogues alternate as the band plays relentlessly on at the fringe while unarmed men, women and children are senselessly slaughtered in the name of peace and progress. This sequence, among the best that Penn has ever assembled, has a tragic depth that shows up the shallow, shoddy treatment of a similar incident in Ralph Nelson's *Soldier Blue*.

The second sequence I wish to single out comes at the very end, when Old Lodge Skins goes up to the hills to die in ritual fashion. He fulfils his aim in the book, but fearing the charge of sentimentality, Penn and Willingham deny

him and us this conventional ending. 'Well, sometimes the magic works and sometimes it doesn't,' he says as he rises to his feet and makes his way back to the village resting on Little Big Man's shoulder. In a succession of dissolving long-shots, an elegiac dying fall, we follow their slow downhill progress through the rain that soaks the bleak Montana terrain, until—still chatting inconsequentially—they disappear into the distance.

PHILIP FRENCH

Tristana

I saw *Tristana* (Academy) first in Cadiz in April 1970 in a half empty cinema with the familiar roaring buzz which passes for a soundtrack in Spanish cinemas. The print was poor, my knowledge of Spanish worse, and the audience was apathetic: I came out convinced that the film was a subtle but unmistakable allegory of the political situation in Spain.

Tristana (Catherine Deneuve) is the ward of Don Lope, an ageing bourgeois businessman who professes no interest in money, boasts about his honour in all areas save his sexuality. He is a man of substance who loses his money and property casually, who preaches defence of the weak with studied self-pity, and sexual freedom as an excuse for his desire for Tristana, whom he seduces. She in turn has an affair with a handsome young painter, Horacio, who runs away with her, only to return her contrite, sick and null to Don Lope, whose fortunes have recovered. She loses a leg by amputation. Don Lope marries her, and one cold night when he has a heart attack she opens the window to the snow and whilst pretending to call a doctor she lets him die.

The film is set in Toledo in the 1920s: so Tristana herself can be seen to stand for bourgeois Spain, immature, sullen and beautiful, exploited by the hypocrisy of the Fascists and the cynicism of the Republicans. There are two scenes in the centre of the film which encourage this allegorical reading. Don Lope comes to visit Horacio in his studio, attempting to provoke him to a duel. Horacio merely knocks him down brutally, there and then. Meanwhile two caped figures emerge from the darkness to succour the old man. Later, when Horacio returns, having abducted Tristana, he is sickeningly reformed: respectably suited, he apologises to Don Lope for his former behaviour with the clear intention that he will do anything to have Tristana off his hands. Directly and indirectly Tristana-Spain is subject to gross treatment. Her only decisive gesture is a futile one; earlier on she has spoken to Don Lope in a cloister of how she prefers one column to another.

There are many other details in the film which could be used to force it into a political framework; yet confronted with it again, in a fine print and with excellent subtitles, it becomes no more than an amusing pastime, and I realise that it is only the reputation of its director, Luis Buñuel, which suggested the exercise in the first place.

Because Buñuel is both so confident and subtle an artist, critics have frequently been guilty of foisting on him intentions for which there is only the most flimsy evidence—or rather they have seen ideology and moral ambiguity where there has been playfulness. We are surely *not* intended to start guessing what is inside the little buzzing box which the monstrous Asian displays to the heroine of *Belle de Jour*, still less what it 'stands for'. It is a mystery as much to her, to the audience and, one suspects, to Buñuel himself.

As a piece of traditional narrative cinema, *Tristana* is impeccable. Every shot is composed with authority, each sequence runs the right length, and above all the finding of a directorial pace and tone which reflects the peculiar empty claustrophobia of the story and the setting is



'Tristana': Fernando Rey, Lola Gaos, Catherine Deneuve

masterly. The opening shot of Toledo is reminiscent of the El Greco painting, except that there is no storm. It is a swarm of ochre buildings, inanimate. Next we see Tristana and her maid Saturna, both in mourning for Tristana's mother, walking across a waste land. Deaf-mute boys are playing a chaotic ball game. Already one senses that their vigorous uncoordinated tearings about have more to do with natural life than the pyramid of houses and the little black figures, constricted and hurrying. It is soon established that Tristana herself, young and beautiful, recognises this. While she mimes the reasons for her mourning to Saturna's son at the institution she smiles both sweetly and excitedly. She is in complicity. The young are young, and the dead are dead.

Throughout the film the presence of nature is both marked and sparse. Saturna's son with his sexuality and friendliness, his laziness and cunning, is one example; another is the use of food. The meals at Don Lope's flat, and their preparation by Saturna, are filmed in a way that makes food seem both voluptuous and in contrast to the empty streets, the crowded café where Don Lope drinks coffee with his friends, a true expression of life. And yet the deadening wintry emptiness of Toledo is not stressed; it is a provincial town where small dramas (the shooting of a mad dog, the meeting in the park between Don Lope and his hated sister) take on the heightened significance of major events in lives filled with no real purpose.

Perhaps because *Tristana* is drawn from a novel by Benito Galdós, who died in 1920, we may deduce some form of autobiographical comment from Buñuel's slight up-dating of the story. And perhaps also we may detect in Fernando Rey's magnificent embodiment of Don Lope a characteristically unsentimental comment by Buñuel on late-flowering lust. Don Lope's self-delusion is both comic and destructive. He is quite incapable of guessing that his proprietorial feelings for Tristana are going first to maim her and secondly to turn her into his murderess.

There are very few shots in the film which immediately suggest Buñuel to the coarse eye—one perhaps, taken through the feet of a piano showing Tristana playing it with only one leg; another when she sees the clanger in a large bell transformed into Don Lope's severed head. The great director's signature on this, his most sober film, is to be detected in its pace and irony, and those are in every frame.

JULIAN JEBB

Death in Venice

When Thomas Mann created Gustav Aschenbach he compiled a conscious summary of the twentieth century's first decade. Mahler's death in 1911 was the cue to which he was responding, but as was demonstrated by his translation of the central character in his story from composer to writer, Mann recognised not only the autobiographical link between Mahler's work and his own but also the more widely familiar influences upon the times of other German commentators. Aschenbach, like Mahler, has forsaken earlier passions for the serenity of perfect art, but he is equally the offspring of Mann's encounters with Schopenhauer (for whom death was the real aim of life), with Nietzsche (whose concern was with the need for victory over oneself), and with Wagner, in whom Mann found both the association of love and art with death and the *Werkinstinkt*, the will to toil and endure. The slender narrative of *Death in Venice*, with its joyful celebration of classical triumph and simultaneous confession of social defeat, stands midway between *Buddenbrooks* and *The Magic Mountain*—between, in fact, the theme of the individual tortured by his sense of isolation and that of the individual's acceptance of his social context. It is a story in which the crisis of one generation is handed lovingly to the next in the expectation that once again it will be transcended.

With Visconti's version, *Death in Venice* (Warner) reverts to an account of Mahler's philosophy: Aschenbach is now a composer, whose symphonies, like Mahler's, are received with storms of abuse, whose background, like Mahler's, is one of tragic deprivation (Mann had disposed of Aschenbach's family in eight lines), and whose contention, like Mahler's, is that beauty is the product of conscious effort rather than of instinct and accident. Visconti draws the resemblance even closer by the addition of arguments taken from Mahler's correspondence with Schönberg, now taking the form of passionate confrontations around the grand piano. Although Schönberg's quite sensible points are finally proven for him by Aschenbach's Venetian experience, he is however presented as something of a bully, exulting at the apparent collapse of Aschenbach's career with the delighted observation that man and artist are at last in perfect balance—they've reached bottom at the same moment. Not surprisingly, the director of *The Damned* retains an affection for the Wagnerian concepts which bring him back to



'Death in Venice': Bjorn Andresen, Dirk Bogarde

Mann's conclusion: that perfection of knowledge and of beauty can be equally dangerous, but that the latter danger is preferable. Visconti's command of both has customarily displayed a similar bias.

The reconstruction of turn-of-the-century Venice, then, could scarcely have been in more appropriate hands, and Visconti has done full justice to his task. The Hotel des Bains, a hot-house of enormous feathered hats and only slightly larger satin lampshades, is rich with movement and display, its cosmopolitan chatter perpetually reinforced by a small orchestra's unending repertoire of popular classics, its choreography firmly but discreetly guided by a regiment of porters, pageboys and waiters. Aschenbach's first glimpses of Tadzio, the Polish youth who is to dominate his last days, occur during a series of lavish camera movements around the hotel lounge, which convey superbly both the oppressiveness and the stimulation of the setting in which he finds himself.

Even taking into full account the costumed set-pieces of *Senso* and *The Leopard*, Visconti and Piero Tosi have excelled themselves in these scenes with the immaculate assistance of Ferdinando Scarfiotti's backgrounds, all brocades, flower-vases and immense sprouting ferns. On the beach outside, the sense of period is equally breathtakingly maintained, with Mann's delicately observed incongruities scrupulously reproduced—even to the dead-ripe strawberries, the unlikely turreted sandcastle, and the abandoned camera on its tripod. As a cloud of white figures bearing parasols drifts along the edge of the barely moving sea, and multilingual snatches of conversation whisper across the sand, it's almost possible to believe, with Aschenbach, that we have entered an enchanted, timeless world.

Almost, but not quite, and not for long. Visconti's preoccupation with the processes of decay and disintegration has found in *Death in Venice* its most hallucinatory illustration. The beach scenes are largely filmed in a diffused, chilly light, a morning haze in which shadows are a watery grey and abrupt breezes snap at the awnings of the bathing-huts; only during the final visit of Aschenbach to the beach does the sun beat down, crushing him into the vast arena of sand (filmed in a burningly static long-shot) and melting his pathetic façade of youthfulness. Venice itself is photographed by De Santis in muted colours, increasingly darkened by the

smoke of plague-fires; the city is a hostile warren of cloistered streets and tiny bridges dwarfed by high peeling walls, among which Aschenbach pursues his wandering love with a choking desperation. The pursuit of an elusive ideal that pauses only long enough to check that it is still being followed, smiles a hint of encouragement, and then moves on again, served Mann completely as a method of presenting the malaise that was to culminate in the First World War.

In Visconti's eyes, the vision again becomes disturbingly contemporary, for all that Don Fabrizio in *The Leopard* or Simone in *Rocco* have trodden similar landscapes. The old world is crumbling and no amount of elegance, violence or face-lifting will bring it back. And so Gustav Aschenbach, played by Dirk Bogarde with whole-hearted dedication, collapses among the garbage, laughs weakly at the corruption of his vanities, and accepts Schönberg's parting shot—that no impurity is so impure as old age. Visconti's achievement—and it is doubtful whether any other director could have managed it—has been to balance this acceptance with hope, beauty and a kind of contentment. Mahler would surely have approved.

PHILIP STRICK

Death by Hanging

Nagisa Oshima's *Death by Hanging* opens with a cold recital of facts. 'Are you for or against the abolition of capital punishment?' asks a title, and a narrator invites the 71 per cent in favour of State murder to watch a hanging. A prison execution block, isolated in an overhead shot; inside, where the walls are salmon pink and a polished urinal is the only derangement of the cell's perfect geometry, the condemned man is prepared for hanging. The liturgy of execution: a priest's blessing, the last cigarette, the blindfold, the rope, the trapdoor. But the body of the condemned man, now identified simply as R, refuses execution; his heart, which the commentary tells us should stop after about twelve minutes, obstinately goes on beating. Fiction begins to obtrude on fact.

As in his later *Boy*, Oshima has taken an actual case as his point of departure for *Death by Hanging* (Academy/Connoisseur). R is a Japanese Korean, hanged for the rape and murder of two girls in 1958. But like *Boy*, the

film is not so much based on facts as structured round them; a documentary fact merely provides the thematic framework around which Oshima builds a complex interplay between reality and appearance.

Ostensibly, the scenes which follow R's hanging represent a critique (devastating) of the logic of capital punishment. The prison officials are confounded, but anxious to follow the letter of the law; and since R is unconscious and Japanese law prohibits the execution of an unconscious man ('Death only has meaning if we know it is coming,' one of the officials explains), their first task is to revive him so that he can be hanged again. Contradictions multiply. The doctor hesitates; he is there to verify death, not restore life. Artificial respiration brings R round, but the shock of the hanging has induced amnesia and he no longer accepts that he is R; which gives the priest (R is Roman Catholic as well as Korean) a loophole for some religious hair-splitting along Cartesian 'ghost in the machine' lines. The Education Officer (Fumio Watanabe, the father in *Boy*) has a brilliant idea: R must accept his guilt before he can be hanged again, so why not convince him of it by re-enacting his crime? With mounting enthusiasm (which Oshima observes with a disorienting black humour), the officials set about staging the charade for R's benefit, until he finally agrees to be R and can be safely hanged again.

Except that when the trapdoor opens again, there is no body on the end of the rope. And the Public Prosecutor, who until now has observed the proceedings with unblinking detachment, turns to thank the audience for their participation. What we have been watching, he might have added, is a masquerade, a formal demonstration of what Oshima has called 'the continual reciprocity between reality and fiction.' The idea is central to each of the three recent Oshima films we have seen. It is the basis of *Boy*, where the family's existence depends on an act of deception; and of course it recurs throughout *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief*, with its convoluted variations on the theme of performance. The disappearing body at the end of *Death by Hanging* is much more than the formalistic convenience it seems at first; with its repeated juxtaposition of real and apparent contradictions, the whole film has prepared us for this final *coup de théâtre*.

For a start, the film is based on a non-event: R is not hanged (though of course the real R did expire within the prescribed twelve minutes). The cause and effect synthesis is thus immediately demolished, to be replaced by a series of circular antitheses; a paradoxical concept, admittedly, but this is what the film is about, and interestingly the circle symbol occurs several times—in the noose, in the sun which illuminates R and his 'sister' in a fantasy image inserted just at the moment he is supposed to be accepting reality, in the representation of the sun on the omnipresent Japanese flag. The antitheses proliferate, and Oshima assembles them with an intellectual rigour the more remarkable because their interior logic is as unassailable as the prison doctor's whimsical idea that they are all ultimately murderers, since the execution of R involves them in an endless retributory spiral (Quis custodiet ipsos custodies?). When, for instance, the officials lead R outside the prison so that he can re-enact his crime more realistically (just how 'real' these exterior scenes are Oshima indicates by shooting them in the half-light and periodically fading the sound), the Education Officer isn't convinced by his performance—originally intended, of course, to convince R himself—and stands in for him. Performance overruns pretence; carried away, he kills a girl. The girl seems to be real until she reappears in a coffin (draped in the national flag) inside the execution block. At first only the Education Officer can 'see' her. But 'those who don't see don't imagine well enough,' and when she comes back to life, almost everyone sees her and R greets her as his elder sister—

though we have been told earlier that he hasn't one.

This idea of collective imagining can be taken as a metaphor for the relationship between the individual (real) and the State (an imaginary entity), another Oshima preoccupation given voice here. R's final confrontation with 'reality' comes after he has told his 'sister' about his masturbation fantasies and how in his mind's eye the objects of his fantasies become real. Like the boy in *Boy*, R confronts reality only after he has first created and then destroyed a fantasy. Imagination continually alters our idea of reality; or in other words, the conflict between the State and the individual can be resolved not by a single revolutionary act (like the book-stealing in *Shinjuku Thief*) but by a continuing revolutionary process—and so can never be resolved. R lets himself be hanged again for his crime only when he is certain of his innocence; the relationship between the State and the individual depends on that kind of contradiction.

R's crime is personal and only implicitly political (and of course sexual; the idea of sex as a symbolic act is as important here as it is in *Shinjuku Thief*), but the Korean girl he accepts as his sister interprets it as an explicit political act—an act of retribution by the Korean minority in Japan for their years of repression by the Japanese. Oshima does not directly refute this argument (though he does make incidental references to the persistence of the Japanese militarist mentality). But he comments on it indirectly by having the prison officials characteristically invert it; the officials insist that R is culpable before the law and that his Korean origins are irrelevant, while at the same time crudely stressing those origins in their reenactment of R's home life (Koreans are thought to be loud and loudish, to urinate on the floor, and so on).

As we have come to expect of Oshima's films, *Death by Hanging* repeatedly turns arguments on their head. And in doing so it throws up a challenge (developed further in *Shinjuku Thief*) to the very nature of our conception of what is truth and what merely fiction. Not least in the final acknowledgment of the presence of an audience, which prompts a question about the reality of film *qua* film that only a close analysis of its elaboration in *Shinjuku Thief* could begin to answer.

DAVID WILSON

One Fine Day

One of the most forlorn moments in the cinema comes at the end of Ermanno Olmi's *Il Posto*. The boy has finally got the job that the film has been all about: a clerk has dropped out, a wistful casualty, there is room for the new recruit, and he moves diffidently, with his pencils and rulers, into the big, dim office, where the smell of resignation hangs like must in the air. Defeat and defiance (the boy unemployed, in trouble with the police, on the run like the young workman in *Bronco Bullfrog*) still throw up around them suggestions of romantic possibility. The realist settles for this desolating little humdrum triumph of the job achieved.

But it is part of Olmi's total singularity that his films are as unconcerned with viewing industrialised life romantically, through its rebels, as they are with bearing down on the obvious pressure points of mismanagement. His managers do their best; the companies that employ them are socially enlightened. His characters are not even given the final recourse—inescapable enough in any English film about working life—of hating each other. Factory and office relationships in Olmi's films are notably tolerant and resilient. His concern is with a quality of life, a quality of seriousness (his humour is really a beautiful by-product: the comedy of all human activity under sustained

and sufficiently generous observation) which has its inescapable support in a Christian ethic of responsibility.

In *One Fine Day* (Academy/Connoisseur), these shadow standards, never explicitly invoked, seem particularly relevant. This time the setting is an advertising agency, the Italian subsidiary of a Common Market concern run bustlingly from Frankfurt. The agency's managing director is put out of action by a heart attack—a sudden surrender during a conference, his head sliding into his hands as the projector blindingly flashes illustrations for a new campaign. As in *Il Posto*, a casualty equals an opportunity. Bruno, his second in command, gets promotion by selling Frankfurt on a campaign to promote a new synthetic food. They call it Job Dinner (Common Market English in full, not absolutely idiomatic cry); and it sounds dismal. But Olmi, who never regards his characters more lightly than they see themselves, is not going to be trapped into the dead end game of making fun of advertising. The packaging and marketing of Job Dinner are serious business.

Bruno has cut his life to a tidy pattern: his work, the place in Tuscany where he can play weekend squire roughing it with his dogs (and the camera sees the countryside as very beautiful, a city romantic's misty dream), the secure family life which we only actually encounter in the film's second half, when he needs it as a bulwark, and his affairs on business trips. One of these, with a girl interviewer at the agency, introduces a flicker of disorientation: she's an individual from another generation, measuring him on her own terms, unlike the older woman of an earlier scene who is kept sitting up patiently over a hotel television set. But the pattern only shivers slightly: as with the managing director's heart attack, the tremor is simply there, to be picked up on some mental seismograph.

The fissure is opened by the accident at the film's centre: something so sudden, irrelevant and bewildering that neither Bruno nor the film's audience even realise what has happened. Driving on an icy road, he somehow knocks against a handcart pushed by two workmen, and one of them is killed. It is, emphatically, the purest of mischances. (The court gives Bruno the benefit of the doubt, and the cinema audience need not be conspicuously less lenient.) Technicians take over: a preoccupied doctor, policemen, Bruno's own lawyer, with his delicate draughting of witnesses. 'You will have noticed the little path leading off into the fields,' says

the lawyer to Bruno's woman passenger, who plainly had noticed no such thing. The lawyer, another conscientious workman, reduces the accident to measurable distances, a demonstrable logic of what might have happened. Bruno himself is left, as it were, with the metaphysics of the accident: the imponderables of responsibility, the extent to which he is diminished by a death.

It is typical of Olmi that he should choose a factory waiting-room as setting for this dark night of the executive soul. Bruno retreats to the familiar offices of the manufacturers of Job Dinner to make telephone calls and to keep discreetly out of the way of the police. It's Saturday; the factory is closing; and the porter is Olmian man at his most characteristic, caught between his determination to go home, his duty to his employers, and his instincts towards helpfulness. Many scenes in *One Fine Day* are presented elusively, as brief, suggestive interchanges. But the dialogues with the porter are filmed not from Bruno's altitude of impatience, but with a most impartial objectivity, allowing the man every right to work out the harassment that has interrupted his Saturday. Once he *has* worked it out, to his own official satisfaction, helpfulness characteristically wins: there's a more comfortable office than the dour waiting-room, and if Bruno likes to pull two chairs together he may even get some sleep. . . . And this, of course, is Olmi's extraordinary gift: to be able to create these tangential encounters with whole men, but men formed (or deformed) by their jobs.

In *I Fidanziati* Olmi introduced time-flashes, a Resnais style of allusion, which are here developed. Bruno's wife, for instance, is a comforting, timeless presence in her husband's mind, a woman forever smiling as she opens a door, before we encounter her in reality. Olmi is too reticent an artist, however, to let these mental flashes lead him beyond his characters' own range of awareness. One thinks, by extreme contrast, of *The Arrangement*, and the wayward camera forays which assailed Kazan's hapless advertising man—all the reach-me-down analysis that finds no place in Olmi's plainer but more taxing morality. Bruno is simply put under the pressure of the moment when life slips out of control; and if he rediscovers dependence on his family, there is no suggestion that this is necessarily going to last. The film's other accident victim, Bruno's former boss, is only briefly happy with the convalescence that sets him free from the values of the office.

Olmi's precise artistic tact, and his diffidence

Victim on the rope in 'Death by Hanging'



in front of an essential human elusiveness, gives the film its exemplary shape. Fascinatingly, he has used players—Brunetto del Vita as Bruno, Lidia Fuortes, superb as the girl interviewer—who are not merely non-professionals but who themselves work in life at the jobs they hold in the film. 'I put them in a position to relive their daily lives,' he has said, 'putting to the test their responsibility towards the world.' Olmi himself, it becomes more apparent from film to film, is putting illuminatingly to the test two conflicting but not irreconcilable propositions: that a mould is formed around a man by the circumstances of his work; and that we all take final responsibility for the quality of our own lives.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

Husbands

Shadows, Faces, Husbands: John Cassavetes' titles serve both to define and to impersonalise his films' subject area. The announced theme provides a broad orientation, but the audience is finally left to interpret the raw material—fragmented narrative, improvised dialogue and action, long sequences apparently incidental to the main characters—at will. Thus, *Husbands* (Columbia) is both a 'universal' male's-eye-view of marital restlessness and a haphazard idiosyncratic 48 hours out of the lives of three fugitives from New York suburbia. The titles of Cassavetes' trilogy have become more tangible, as the focus shifts from the rootless youth of *Shadows* to the grounded suburbanites of *Faces* and *Husbands*.

At the same time, an increased budget, colour photography and 'name' actors makes the new film more obviously professional in style. The alternation of static takes and hectic camera movement, the interior scenes punctuated by street interludes, both familiar from early Cassavetes, seem more artfully used here to vary tempo. And the occasional moments of shoddiness (scratched-on rain at London Airport, a microphone and boom tilting into view in the last scene) look a little like the director's tribute to a lost amateurism. But such professionalism extends no further than to a tighter control over the film's visual surface. Action and dialogue are still generated largely by improvisation within long takes (the netball game in the gym, the conversation between Gus and Mary in Henry's Soup Kitchen), and the use of the telephoto lens allows the multi-character scenes (the sing-song in the bar) to gather their own momentum varied by close-up but unbroken by new set-ups.

Husbands begins with a montage of family snaps depicting Gus, Archie, Harry and Stuart playfully flexing their muscles for the camera, or relaxing with their wives. The first 'live' scene is the arrival of Gus, Archie and Harry at Stuart's funeral, and from that point *Husbands* is concerned to examine how they adjust, not only to the loss of their friend but to the unwelcome reality of their dependence on their wives which his death brings home. Their first instinct is to stick together as men: as the three recover from vomiting fits after a late-night drinking session following the funeral, Gus (Cassavetes) tells the withdrawn Harry (Ben Gazzara), 'At first there were four of us, then there were three of us, and you want to be alone!' Their 48-hour odyssey, voluntarily procrastinating the return to domesticity, becomes an abortive attempt to transplant their roots from the constriction of suburban marriage to a new, male camaraderie, in which all the good things of life—sport, drink, gambling, sex—seem at last freely accessible.

In *Faces*, Richard and Maria, having vainly sought alternatives to the marital impasse, ended up sitting on the stairs together, speechless and unloving. Belonging had become a kind of imprisonment. In *Husbands*, self-styled a comedy by Cassavetes, marriage is less of an



'Husbands': Ben Gazzara, John Cassavetes and Peter Falk

impasse: Gus and Archie return home without regrets, albeit with the bribery of expensive presents, while Harry simply walks out on his wife. Male comradeship, that recurring American dream from Fenimore Cooper to Hemingway, is a revitalising interlude rather than a final escape route for the three.

Framed between a funeral and a return to suburbia, their 48 hours on the town becomes an attempt to extract life from a world that seems to be dying around them, choked by false or inhibited emotional response. The drunken sing-song in the bar seems at first too long a scene for its tenuous relevance, but in retrospect it is crucial. Where the forced solemnity of the funeral struck no responsive chord in Gus, Archie or Harry, the naïve sentimentality of 'Apple Blossom Time in Normandy' and 'Pack Up Your Troubles' becomes a vehicle for real feeling. The woman who chimes in nervously with 'It was Just a Little Love Affair' is badgered mercilessly by Gus and Harry—vilified, slapped, kissed—until she has sung the first line with proper feeling: 'That's honest! I like that!'

When the quest for honesty takes them on a whirlwind trip to London, ambassadors of American bravado to the phlegmatic English, the film becomes a shade obvious. Cassavetes' upper-crust Londoners are caricatured—Diana Mallabee submitting with aristocratic sangfroid to Harry's boozy kisses, the ageing Countess rolling her leathery lips in lascivious invitation to Archie—and one feels he is making use of a convenient but outworn formula, the Jamesian view of the American in Europe as brash innocent confronting old-world decadence. The change of setting is necessary however to allow Harry, an increasingly remote and saturnine member of the trio, to sink new roots outside America, while the film turns to follow Gus and Archie, feeling the prick of conscience or a sated wanderlust, back to their antiseptic New York suburbs.

The characterisation moves from the impersonal to the particular. For much of the film all three men wear identical heavy black overcoats, and in the sequences of street wandering, those vagrant interludes between one attempt to re-root themselves and the next, they seem an indistinguishable silhouette trio, further flattened into their surroundings by the telephoto lens. But, moment by moment, each is singled out for examination. Harry is the trio's

most sombre and alienated member, getting drunk but holding aloof from the other's vomiting session in the lavatory, walking out after his wife's bread-knife attack with a casual sarcasm, 'I'm just uncomfortable in front of you. That's it. It's nothing personal,' and staying in London while the others fly back to their wives and kids. Gazzara's performance, tense, dangerous, but wearing a perpetual wry grin, suggests a carefully groomed invulnerability only breached by stray close-ups, such as the troubled turn of the head as he overhears Gus, telephoning his wife, tell her 'I really love you.'

Gus, less inflexibly cynical than Harry, looks on drink, gambling and infidelity as temporary relief to suburbia. Both he and Archie (Peter Falk) appease their restlessness by a brief visit to the fleshpots of London, where Gus's night—half seduction, half rape—with his seemingly frigid pick-up Mary, and Archie's despairing attempt to chat up a speechless and inscrutable Chinese girl, are played virtually as comic relief. Archie seems the shadowiest of the three, but it is perhaps in the nature of his role as clown that during the film we never see his family or job, that third dimension valuably given to Gus and Harry. Of the three performances, only Falk's, trading too much on familiar comic mannerisms, casts doubt on Cassavetes' wisdom in using well-known actors. Otherwise, it is a measure of how richly *Husbands* is an advance on pure *cinéma vérité* that the main roles demand more than the rough authenticity of the non-professional: they need the professional's pinpoint accuracy and quick-change command of mood. Cassavetes' precarious position midway between Hollywood and the American underground is fully vindicated by a film that combines the best values of both worlds.

NIGEL ANDREWS

The Revolutionary

Out of It, Paul Williams' first feature, was precisely located in time (the early 1960s) and space (the New York suburbs). Its strength derived from its uncannily accurate observation of detail, its tension from the gap between the actuality and the aspirations of its misfit adolescent hero. Its single weakness lay in Williams' use of some crude, colour-washed fantasy inserts, gratuitous since the hero's inner

life was already amply conveyed both by his material props and his stilted social encounters.

In turning for his second feature to Hans Koningsberger's screenplay from his own novel (one of the very few that can be described as Kafkaesque without insult to Kafka), Williams was clearly determined to stretch and test his abilities as a film-maker, and to avoid any temptation merely to repeat either the successes or the mistakes of his first film. *The Revolutionary* (United Artists) is set in an unidentified country at some unspecified time in the present century: in other words, in a world that requires construction rather than simple observation. The challenge facing its director is to create a credible Never-Neverland that can at the same time support the considerable symbolic weight which the story imposes on it: the setting is not so much—as the opening title suggests—'somewhere in the free world', but *anywhere* in the free world that right-wing 'democracy' exercises its own peculiar combination of tolerant rhetoric and arbitrary restraints.

In Koningsberger's novel, first published in 1968, analogies with contemporary America are left unemphasised and even unstated. The action takes place in the first decade of this century; the unsettling *mores* of its unnamed country are recognisably closer to Middle Europe than to the United States; and the 'alienation' that provides its mainspring is that of the hero (A) in relation to his society, not of the reader in relation to the hero.

In transposing the novel to the screen, Williams has preferred to update the action to a period which clothes, faces and props mark as distinctly post-war (the costume style is decidedly *Army Surplus*). More curiously, and less satisfactorily, he has also chosen to suggest the universality of his setting by compounding it of diverse and often incohesive elements: London streets, instantly recognisable despite the absence of traffic, populated by jack-booted policemen and American actors. The squalid meeting-places of the radical agitators, the middle-class comfort of A's parental home, the cardboard and studio-bound opulence of the rich girl's mansion—each of these is suggested in a different style. And their very separateness, while providing a kind of visual 'explanation' of A's social malaise, has the jarring effect of distancing the audience from the film. Instead of bringing home, through analogy, the relevance of A's situation to our own lives, the film rather detaches us from it, as if showing us fragments of our world through the wrong end of a telescope. Though Williams' treatment attests his desire to avoid exploiting all the newfound fashionableness of some of the novel's timeless themes—student protest, police brutality, revolution—it also robs them of urgency. Carefully eschewing emotionalism, Williams bares his intellectual intentions. His film suffers, like A himself, from the difficulty of making the transition from idea to accomplishment.

In the novel, this discrepancy between ambition and achievement is humorously evoked through A's carefully recorded thought-stream—a self-consciously literary and essentially self-indulgent exercise in auto-criticism. (At one point, A describes himself as a sub-standard Stendhal character.) In the film, Williams denies his audience any direct insight into the thoughts that govern A's advance from bourgeois philosophy student to ineffectual malcontent to bomb-carrying party member. That A himself never fully understands this evolution, that it should result as much from a series of accidents as from a series of choices (in such a combination of circumstances we are all potential assassins) is as inherent a part of the novel's irony as A's exalted view of even his most insignificant actions. But by making him a Sartrean hero, solely the sum of his acts and words, Williams makes virtually impossible demands of his principal actor, Jon Voight, who is obliged to rely almost entirely on the resources of his own extremely mobile face to convey the character's

tensions and misconceptions.

Yet, miraculously, Voight nearly brings it off; and indeed the performances of the entire cast, within the narrow space for manoeuvre allowed them by the film's detached style (few close-ups, little explanatory dialogue, scenes habitually cut off just before they reach a crescendo), are a remarkable tribute to Williams' gift for handling actors. For if *Out of It* and *The Revolutionary* together highlight one another's failings, they still leave one with a conviction that Williams' masterpiece will soon emerge in the golden mean that lies between them.

JAN DAWSON

Get Carter

The mysterious fascination of evil, so key an ingredient in the American thriller of the Forties, seems to have become a thing of the past—perhaps because in the dry, cynical Seventies, where there isn't much fascination to be had from Mao, pollution or the prospect of a nuclear war, we have simply learned to live with it. Although *Get Carter* (MGM-EMI) doesn't exactly sit up and beg for comparison with the Bogart-Marlowe ethos in the manner of *Harper* or *Warning Shot*, it does invite a similar involvement (and suspension of the moral faculty) with its tale of a man who invades gangland to settle a personal score by avenging his brother's murder and leaves a trail of corpses, discarded women and battered friends and foes.

The English setting is brilliantly exploited, with Jack Carter (Michael Caine) whisked out of a glassily impersonal London flat (where his associates try to persuade him not to interfere with syndicate business) and deposited by an equally impersonal express train in Newcastle's seedy wonderland of pubs, back streets and sleazy lodging-houses. Coolly and clinically, in his first feature, Mike Hodges screws his direction up tight against his hero, clamping him in a bright, shiny vice of sex and sadism, and (apart from a couple of appallingly vulgar montages) looking a likely bet for better things

to come. With everything working for it, though—Carter erupting into the gang boss's lair to find a civilised card-game in progress with floozies and gunmen hovering in attendance; the meeting on a deserted bridge with a solitary car nosing casually in; the enigmatic beauty who roars out of nowhere in a gleaming sports car just in time to save Carter from a fate worse than death—the film obstinately remains the sum of its parts. Some good scenes, some excellent performances (John Osborne as the purring Al Capone, Ian Hendry as the black clad and hearted gunman), but no whiff of the aura of legend that accompanied Bogart in his adventures down dark alleys and turned them into crusades, no matter what he was up to.

The fact that the Bogart of the Forties normally played a private eye or an uncommitted good-baddie, while Michael Caine is unequivocally a thug like the men he is up against, is neither here nor there. Bogart had a natural charisma, but Caine has to be supplied with it. Accordingly, there are perfectly reasonable plot explanations about the inoffensiveness of the brother, accompanied by hints that Caine may in fact be the father of his teenage 'niece', offering a neat guilt motif to explain his ruthlessness in avenging the murder—a ruthlessness noticeably increased when he discovers that the niece-daughter has been used by the gang as a blue movie star. Nothing wrong with this, except that it somehow comes out as contrived and sentimental. Either Jack Carter is an authentic post-permissive hero, revelling in the casual sadism with which he stabs one implicated man in the stomach, heaves another off a high building, shoots his arch-enemy at point-blank range, and doesn't give a damn when people foolish enough to help him out of the goodness of their hearts subsequently get beaten up for their pains; or he becomes, as the film pussy-footingly begins to see him, an avenging conscience. In which case one begins to ask awkward questions about character and motives.

Not to mention the awkward questions one could ask about the convenient coincidences: why none of the crew seem to be present during

'Get Carter': Michael Caine in pursuit of Ian Hendry



the shoot-out on a ferry which has just docked, for instance, or who is operating the mechanical dredger on the empty beach which allows Caine to dump Ian Hendry's body in the sea with such satisfying *mise en scène*? In the *film noir* of the Forties, a dark alley was there—and deserted—expressly for the hero to chase or be chased down. In *Get Carter*, largely because the Carter character is Bogart played without Bogart's character, the locations are artificial in the wrong sense. There is, as a matter of fact, a scene where Michael Caine does land in a deserted alleyway, but the iconography is wrong: its depressing blue-grey wash of smoke and poverty, instead of keying one to menace and violence, makes one think of slum clearance, social conscience and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. One would be inclined to blame colour for the false emphasis, here and in the glossy tones assumed by both sex and violence... except that Melville has proved once and for all with *Le Samourai* that *film noir* and colour are not the contradiction in terms they seemed.

TOM MILNE



'Monte Walsh': Lee Marvin

Monte Walsh

'Nobody gets to be a cowboy forever,' muses Jack Palance as he and a white-haired Lee Marvin doze on the veranda in *Monte Walsh* (Fox). While the Italian cinema continues to revitalise the Western in terms of ritual, Hollywood seems preoccupied with an epochal view of the cowboy, seeing him as a champion of pastoral-physical values committed to a losing battle against the march of progress. Nine years ago Kirk Douglas lost out to a posse of police cars and helicopters in *Lonely Are the Brave*. As the closure of the ranches forces him to choose between redundancy and the humiliation of a job in a Wild West show, Monte Walsh—like Douglas—ends up adrift in the desert with only his horse for conversation. Nothing has changed except the quality of defeat: against the defiance of *Lonely Are the Brave*, and the cynicism of *Hud*, William Fraker's film affects a mood of nostalgic resignation, absorbing even the surface drama of the killing of Chet (Jack Palance) and Monte's revenge in the overall picture of a way of life.

'Affects' unfortunately is too often the right word for the film's highly studied approach. Fraker's first film as director follows a notable career as a cameraman (*Rosemary's Baby*, *Bullitt*); and the main defects of *Monte Walsh* are those of an over-organised aesthetic. Fraker's colour range is impressively spare and harmonic, browns and blues predominating to sink the characters into a background of earth and sky, but as the film progresses the elegiac photo-

graphy becomes self-conscious, even narcissistic. Jeanne Moreau's deathbed, aglow with seraphic back-lighting, is the culmination of a growing emphasis on *chiaroscuro*, the visual turning point being the sequence, framed by dissolves between Chet's wedding and Monte's trip to Charleville, in which the camera tracks with Monte as he tours the now deserted houses of Harmony by twilight. Poetic introspection sets in, Fraker's Caravaggio compositions (oil lamps and sunset replacing the daylight of the first half) start to dictate the film's tempo, and even Moreau's laconic dialogue ('As time goes by, you just have to take what you can get,' she says when Monte tells her she is demeaning herself by working as a waitress) is lingered over for full doomed significance.

But if *Monte Walsh* is a Western about the Western, much of its self-awareness works in its favour. Familiarity with Marvin and Palance in their old personae—as hell-raiser and villain respectively—makes their appearance here as a couple of superannuated breadwinners doubly ironic. Not only does it reduce the Western hero from myth to common reality, but it transfers the new villainy to those who embody (Colonel Wilson) or suffer (Shorty) the march of progress. At the end of the scene of Chet's conversation with Fighting Joe, the old fence-mender who 'rode with General Hooker' (and who is the film's third generation, predating Monte and Shorty), the camera cranes up to view the whole valley below them. A traditional closing shot to the Western, it is used here to indicate the closing of Joe's era: Joe's later suicide, reliving his Civil War cavalry charge down Missionary Ridge, is a sudden crazed regression to better times. Monte sees his own reflection in Joe and in Martine—both cowboy and whore, dependent on their physical condition, become disposable with age.

Fraker's aesthetic control—the reduction of colours, the striking use of light, dust clouds, rain, to submerge and then unify the disparate elements of landscape—creates an impressive order out of the film's early scenes, and what is hardly more than a piecemeal collection of gags and horseplay on the Slash Y ranch begins to assume the dignity of a chronicle. But a style sober enough to elevate the script's comic passages proves fatally too heavy when the script itself turns serious. Once the gags disappear, we are left with the embarrassing spectacle of the Western luxuriating in its own death.

NIGEL ANDREWS

Little Fauss and Big Halsy

One can hardly accuse Sidney J. Furie of jumping on the motorbike bandwagon, when he all but laid the foundation stone for it with his *Leather Boys* in 1963. One can hardly blame him for making another cycle film at a time when—even without big stars to ride them—bikes are the nearest thing there is to a guarantee of box-office success. Nor would one want so much to blame him if his return to the dirt track seemed to indicate a sustained fascination with either their aesthetic properties or the aspirations, evasions and inadequacies that cycles so frequently connote.

Little Fauss and Big Halsy (Paramount) pays token respect to both chrome-freaks and Freudians, with races shot from beneath the wheels, and a swaggering stud and a hick-town virgin lowering their voices at crucial moments in the script to confide their sexual insecurities to an obscurely placed camera. But the impression that the cycles—apparently all made and conspicuously labelled by Yamaha—connote nothing much beyond the film's own commercial ambitions is strengthened by its generously diffused nods in the direction of nearly every successful film of the last two years.

Set initially in the American South-West (a favourite territory of recent Furie films,

though the casting of Michael J. Pollard as Little Fauss rather more suggests the influence of *Bonnie and Clyde*), it concerns the vicissitudes of two minor league racers, travelling the United States with their bikes (*Easy Rider*). Essentially, it combines the fable of the tortoise and the hare with that of the town mouse and the country mouse (*Midnight Cowboy*); and in the course of the pair's wanderings, the bragging extrovert (Robert Redford in a crude variation on his part in *Downhill Racer*) comes to learn that the race is not always to the swiftest liar and that patience and dedication, as exemplified in his undersized friend, rival then enemy, can be more than their own reward.

Yet as Michael J. Pollard rounds the final curve to glory, the film's traditional moral is considerably vitiated by the fact that he has by this time patiently acquired most of the nastier characteristics of his former mentor (like stealing the alarm clocks of the big-breasted race track groupies whom he was once too shy to service). Indeed morality (or is it just significance?) is hardly the film's strong suit. The scene in which Fauss and Halsy chase a terrified flock of sheep on their revved-up cycles is given the full lyrical/idyllic treatment of the bicycle ride in *Butch Cassidy*. Throughout the proceedings, Johnny Cash atmospherically intones some singularly inappropriate lyrics ('It takes nerve/To take that curve...') which might more suitably have been entrusted to such dirt track troubadours as Jan and Dean. The film includes a couple of the most crudely explicit sexual moments yet to come out of Hollywood. And most incongruous of all, the hippy girl over whom Fauss and Halsy fall out and who is first glimpsed through a wide-angle lens running, like some *Woodstock* participant, through long grass towards the race track, spends her time ostentatiously reading through the works of William Burroughs in counter-chronological order.

Somewhat surprisingly, Furie does to some extent succeed in unifying these disparate elements through the imposition of a coherent style—albeit the irritating and self-consciously artistic style he first introduced in *Southwest to Sonora*. Nearly all of the action around the Fauss family's white-trash, timber-frame homestead is shot through the grid of the screen door (this facility notwithstanding, the family's preference for lunch in the garden results in several close-ups of food swarming with flies); while the racing itself is shot through such flurries of dust and so many spinning spokes that the onlooker can hardly be said to see most of the game.

Charles Eastman's script is strong on punch lines and 'revealing' sentences ('Cycles is a mean toy, lady'), but swerves too erratically from broad parody ('Daddy, do you want Instant Frost on your Whip-and-Wonder?') to would-be profundity ('What good is the truth?') ever to achieve much credibility. Saddest of all, both Redford and Pollard succumb to the spirit of script and direction, significantly enunciating their lines in a manner that suggests more concern with charisma than characterisation, one eye on the camera and one on the main chance.

And the picture goeth so often to the well, that at last it cometh home broken.

JAN DAWSON

The Music Lovers

And now we pass to *The Music Lovers* (United Artists), directed by Ken Russell, which is a biography of an apparently minor Russian composer called Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-93). Tchaikovsky belonged to that group of gloomy 19th century Russian artists who were always being misunderstood by the artistic establishment. To make it worse, he had homosexual tendencies and a mother complex, although the girl who fell in love with him, Nina Milukova, thought at first that she could make him respond.

But tragedy pursued them all: tormented by his liaison with a foppish Count (who pouts pleadingly at him whenever they meet), Nina goes berserk during a railway journey with Tchaikovsky, strips stark naked and writhes rhythmically to the motion of the train and some loud music—but he remains unmoved. When Tchaikovsky is adopted by a rich patroness, Nadezhda von Meck (who arranges to give him an allowance on condition that they never meet), Nina, now alone except for her scheming mother, becomes a whore, entertaining, in her deranged state, people she believes to be Rimsky-Korsakov and Borodin. Eventually she is committed to an asylum.

Madame von Meck also displays strange aberrations, never showing herself to Tchaikovsky but following him around her house, licking the remains of his meals and secretly lying down beside him while he sleeps. Tchaikovsky dedicates a number of his symphonies to her, only to be finally rejected when she learns about his relations with the Count; after writing the 'Pathétique' Symphony, Tchaikovsky goes into a decline and deliberately drinks a glass of cholera-infected water. A selection of excerpts from his musical output accompanies this narrative, although few titles are actually named, excepting the First Piano Concerto of which much is heard (accompanied by lyrical country images, many in slow motion, featuring Tchaikovsky with his friends and relations). Judging from what we hear, he had an irritatingly bombastic style, usually beginning pieces with loud chords and continuing at much the same dynamic level. One work, the 1812 Overture, accompanies a wild surreal carnival parade, and is punctuated with cannon shots which symbolically decapitate plaster models of people who dominated his life.

This condensed plot outline is possibly what the musically uninitiated might make of this monstrous film, a mixture of semi-truths and fanciful conjecture on the lines of Russell's now infamous Strauss biography for BBC-TV. The same criticisms in fact apply: if it was witty or entertaining or really biting, one might not have been unduly bothered by the cold, unfeeling interpretation; but *The Music Lovers* has none of these qualities. Russell's style here is more like a battering ram than ever, with his now familiar visual vocabulary used to withering effect, with bits of Bergman and Fellini flying in and out when most expected, and each sequence inflated to an hysterical climax, so that by the time the camera has gyrated through the train sequence, 1812 and the asylum most people will be ready to hold up their hands in surrender.

Paradoxically enough, the style has the effect of inducing a new enthusiasm and sympathy for what Tchaikovsky actually wrote. Presumably, after his declaration of regard for Strauss in a TV interview, Mr. Russell would claim an equal affection for his latest acquisition, but the film belies him. Not even Hollywood at its ripest has equalled the vulgarity of the images accompanying some of the composer's most deeply felt pages, culminating in the use of the 'Pathétique' for the asylum scrimmage, with its palpitating extras and screaming close-ups.

Neither script nor playing (Richard Chamberlain as Tchaikovsky, Glenda Jackson as Nina) offers subsidiary pleasures, the former being flat and anachronistic and the latter without period sense. The sad thing is that behind it all lurks an exuberance, an enjoyment in the sheer act of film-making, which many of our more sober directors totally lack. At the moment, however, Russell seems to see himself as a kind of all-purpose magician, pulling out of the hat every rabbit he can see; but now the early *frissons* he created for his audience are in danger of turning merely into cold shudders. The next composer on the list is said to be Gustav Mahler, who was weighed down with memories of dead children, a heart condition and premonitions of his own death...

JOHN GILLET

Kuleshov

from page 91

contend with affected, bombastic playing by Constantine Khokhlov of Stanislavsky's M.A.T. But despite these difficulties, even despite what might appear a banal subject for the Western viewer, *The Great Consoler* strikes me as Kuleshov's deepest film. And ironically, on a level which apparently eluded the party critics who assailed him, it attested his unwavering Marxism.

As Kuleshov conceived it, *The Great Consoler* informed the Marxist argument that art cannot exist free of its social context, that any fiction is embedded in a given milieu which necessarily makes it an expression of social ideology. To that extent, the film at once parodied and denounced the counter-fet heroics of American films (as in the dream sequence in which Valentine rescues the child and gets the girl). Neither O. Henry's stories nor American films often represented suffering as the degradation of people victimised by social systems. Rather, they usually chose to portray suffering as a way-station in the hero's quest to overcome adversity (often gratuitously) and so affirmed the predominance of 'good' over 'evil'. That was perhaps the most common permutation of the Hollywood ending. In the context of Soviet revolutionary thought, any film which betrayed the socio-ideological matrix in which it was produced, which was not devoted to the betterment of man within the social context but was rather a function of the director's special interests, may be presumed a luxury of decadence or narcissism. It placed individual interest above the collective need. Moreover, nihilism in the Soviet film could be depicted as an assault on human fulfilment, but to have portrayed it as an ultimate human condition was to presume an elitist omniscience which by definition impoverished humanity, and which alienated the artist from the people.

As a further example, this ideological framework became the crux of the distinction to be made between the 'American' ending of *By the Law* and the Soviet one. Implicit in the London story (and in the English subtitles on the U.S. print) is an ending which turned on a cruel irony: the senselessness of the Nelsons' retributive style of justice. In London's story the motive for Dennin's action was moot. Yet, Kuleshov's film saw the entire group victimised by 'gold fever'—an obsessive, bourgeois drive towards amassing individual wealth—and hence as destroyed by its inevitable concomitants of greed and expediency. As a Marxist film, *By the Law* was more a microcosmic study of the futility of self-aggrandisement than a tragedy in which Dennin's suspicion and greed impelled him towards mayhem.

Similarly, *The Great Consoler* was a film which posed a question about the inherent social obligations of making films. At first glance, Kuleshov's question was whether the artist, in this case O. Henry, abetted the social system which oppressed him, his fellow convicts and his readers, by mollifying the direness of their plight. But the shadow question which by implication emerged was a far more perilous one for the times—whether a severely repressed society needed panegyrics to Stalinism or a depiction of the grim 'reality' the artist saw. For just as

Kuleshov's film represented Porter as having abdicated responsibility by creating his 'beautiful lies', it also implicated all Soviet artists who bent to Stalin's yoke; including, as he must have realised, Kuleshov himself.

In the midst of all the critical controversy surrounding *The Great Consoler*, it was unlikely that Kuleshov could have miscalculated the extent of the slander that was to be heaped on him when the Congress of Film Workers convened in January, 1935. The year after the film's release, Kuleshov had resolutely gone on to supervise one of his former students and long-time friends, Leonid Obolensky, in his direction of a film called *The Theft of Sight*. This, along with *The Great Consoler*, precipitated Kuleshov's denunciation by members of the Congress, and his notably brief and remarkably unrepentant 'confession' to formalistic errors, to having asserted the pre-eminence of form over content, and to having made 'bad' films. Kuleshov's creative career was doomed. He was never to direct another major film. He did, however, go on to make several anodyne films for children, one of which especially evidenced the unrelenting pressures of Stalinism. Titled *The Siberians* (1940), it followed the exploits of two boys determined to return a lost pipe of Stalin's to its owner; who was portrayed, as was obligatory, as a benign, avuncular figure to whom all children instinctively gravitated.

Kuleshov published six more books and booklets, the most substantial being his *Practice of Film Direction*, in 1935, and his massive textbook *Fundamentals of Film Direction*, in 1941. At present his memoirs, *Fifty Years*, jointly written with Khokhlova, await posthumous publication in Moscow. In 1944 Kuleshov was appointed Head of the Film Institute, largely through the efforts of Eisenstein, who joined him on the faculty of direction. In 1947 he was awarded his doctorate of arts and in 1967 the Order of Lenin. He continued, usually with Khokhlova, to lecture regularly at the Film Institute almost until his death, on March 29, 1970.

REFERENCES

- HILL, STEVEN P. *Kuleshov—Prophet Without Honour?* Film Culture, No. 44, (Spring 1967).
KULESHOV, LEV. *Iskusstvo Kino*. Moscow, 1929.
LEYDA, JAY. *Kino*. New York, 1960.
PUDOVKIN, VSEVOLOD. *Film Technique and Film Acting*. London, 1954.
ZORKAYA, N. *Portrety*. Moscow, 1966.

Kuleshov with students at VGIK



BOOK REVIEWS

ANDY WARHOL: Films and Paintings

By Peter Gidal
STUDIO VISTA, 80p

In spite of his deadpan disclaimers, his dandyish disdain for film aesthetics, Andy Warhol is, I think, one of the most important filmmakers of the last decade, and Peter Gidal's book is valuable if only because it neatly disposes of a lot of misconceptions about Warhol's work. Warhol does not just slot the film into the camera and let it roll. *Sleep* for example is not simply a record of a man sleeping for six hours. The film, we learn, is made up of three hours of ten-minute segments shot over a six-week period. Warhol did in fact shoot the amount of footage necessary, but 'faked' the final film to get a better design. And it doesn't matter that Warhol uses the word 'fake' where others would use 'montage', 'editing' or 'artistic control'. It all comes down to the same thing.

We also learn that the early films achieve their vital transformation from documentary into dream because, although shot at standard speed, they are meant to be shown at 'silent' speed. Like most artists, however aleatory their methods, Warhol makes a final selection: a majority of the films he has shot have never been released—never even had prints made of them, because he doesn't find them satisfactory. In the early days, the ratio of movies shot to movies released was ten to one. So much, then, for the myth of Warhol, child of nature, who just lets the camera run on and on.

Inasmuch as most of us have not seen the Warhol canon either in its entirety or in chronological order, Mr. Gidal renders a great service in his survey of the four periods of Warhol's work. First came the silent single-action films (*Eat, Sleep, Kiss, Empire*); then the films with scenarios by Ronald Tavel (*Harlot, Kitchen*). The third period consists of films with scenarios by Chuck Wein (*My Hustler, Poor Little Rich Girl*), and the last and most important period to date began with *The Chelsea Girls* and went on through *Nude Restaurant* to *Lonesome Cowboys* and *Blue Movie*. The more important films (with the mysterious exception of *Nude Restaurant*, my own favourite) are described and discussed, and in some measure, analysed; and these are the best parts of the book, perhaps because Mr. Gidal is a film-maker himself.

The first half of the book is quite properly devoted to an examination of Warhol's paintings, and Gidal points out the important connections between the two areas. Unfortunately, Mr. Gidal is not a very good writer, and in this first section many passages have to be read twice in order to be deciphered. Not because the thought expressed is so complex, but because of the author's inadequate grasp of the language. Sentences like 'Relating to minimality is what Warhol is concerned with' are inelegant but understandable. A sentence like 'In order to avoid the deadly influence of "peak-experience" orientation (goal-seeking its rationale), any positive statements about Warhol's genius as an artist should be taken as not intended to conjure idolatry, but as open space for shared experience' comes close to the edge of jargonised mumbo-jumbo. But others cross over the borders of bad style into the land of illiteracy: for example, 'The electric chair was implemented more commonly than it is now, with less chance of successful appeal; one result of the many recent successful appeals is to allow the police and the FBI to make certain that no appeal will even be requested, as in the case of the twenty systematically murdered Black Panther leaders.'

Nevertheless, if the object of a book review is to tell the reader whether the reviewer thinks he should buy the book, then the answer must be yes, because this is so far the only book about Warhol that helps one to understand the importance of his films. After all, Warhol has created the first really new kind of montage since Eisenstein: in *The Chelsea Girls*, he makes each spectator his own editor, free to look at right screen or left screen, to go back and forth at his own speed, even to pick up information peripherally from the screen he is not watching. Warhol has revolutionised our ideas of the possibilities of film dialogue: allowing, if that is the word, Viva and Taylor Mead to circle round and round the limits of their verbal experience in a film like *Nude Restaurant*, he has conceived a new approach to the possibilities of formalising, almost ritualising, naturalistic speech. Through his casual approach to framing, and the constant references to what is going on outside the frame, he has changed the whole notion of the relation of the cinema to reality. Finally, he has pushed back the boundaries of boredom, a key task,

it would seem, of 20th century art, and he has taught us once again the lesson of Blake: 'To see a World in a Grain of Sand,/And a Heaven in a Wild Flower;/Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,/And Eternity in an hour.'

RICHARD ROUD

CLAUDE CHABROL

By Robin Wood and Michael Walker

STUDIO VISTA 70p

Oddly enough, despite the unmistakable personal seal stamped on all his work, 'serious' or not, the Chabrol *persona* isn't too easy to pin down. Witness the recent flurry of articles arguing successfully against the label of cynic which attached to him around the time of *Les Cousins*, but not really managing to absorb into the new image the old Chabrol who pounced on human foibles to magnify them for his own amusement, and who still peeps out irrepressibly from time to time. For instance, in the magnificent comedy of manners in *La Femme Infidèle* where Michel Bouquet pays a call on his wife's lover, Maurice Ronet: the scene is absolutely right and essential, dramatically and psychologically speaking, but I am sure Chabrol also chuckled heartily to himself while filming its tortuous social games.

The joke about Robin Wood's inability to see a joke has probably gone quite far enough, especially now that he is making jokes about it himself, but it does rear its head again *à propos* Chabrol. The problem, it seems to me, is not so much that Robin Wood lacks a sense of humour, as that he takes his humour too seriously. The irresistibly funny fantasies of *Marie-Chantal* and the two Tiger films don't stand much chance against a stern critical eye which muses, 'At best there are occasional moments of genuine feeling...' or '(Marie-Chantal's) innocence provides the film with at least some semblance of a moral centre.' What have moral centres and genuine feelings to do with the *mondo bizarre* of these elegant, stylishly witty in-jokes? Robin Wood's Leavisite approach certainly—and quite validly—demonstrates why these films are inferior to the best of Chabrol, but it also prevents him from doing justice to them on their own level. Just as, incidentally, it moves him to overrate *La Ligne de Démarcation*, a film which responds eagerly to Leavis analysis. While it is good to see justice being done to this much underrated film, it remains, basically, a thoroughly conventional script given a fascinating double edge by Chabrol's casting and *mise en scène*.

But one shouldn't nigger too much about this. If *Marie-Chantal*, the Tigers, and particularly *Landru* (which Wood writes about on the strength of a dubbed, black-and-white print; the original, with its extraordinary *décalage* between Landru's voice and his presence,

and its subtly ambivalent *correspondances* in the use of colour, is a Chabrol film I would defend to the death) are hard done by, Robin Wood's approach pays handsome dividends overall, tracing a convincing line of development from *Le Beau Serge*, *Les Cousins* and *L'Œil du Malin* to the mature riches of *La Femme Infidèle*, *Que la Bête Meure* and *Le Boucher*. I say Robin Wood, since he appears to have charted the scope of the book, but Michael Walker's contribution includes a sympathetic (if arguable) chapter on *Les Cousins*, and a really excellent analysis of all four films from *Les Biches* to *Le Boucher*.

Perceptions abound from both authors. I particularly liked Michael Walker's reading of the last scene of *Les Cousins* when Brial, after shooting Blain, wanders dazedly round the apartment and absently switches on the light: 'For the first time Paul feels the need to see.' He also opens out a pleasing area for meditation by suggesting a comparison between *Le Boucher* and *La Belle et la Bête*, with the beast in both films turning to blood when rejected by beauty. (He is less evocative in making a link between *L'Œil du Malin* and *The Night of the Hunter*: there is nothing 'Gothic', architecturally or otherwise, about *The Night of the Hunter*.) From Robin Wood's side, one of the best things in the book is his complex structural analysis of *A Double Tour*, which picks the film clean and leaves it richer in the mind. But he, more than Michael Walker, tends to get caught in toils of his own spinning. I can't deny, for instance, the rather recherché internal evidence which prompts his lengthy analyses of the relationship of *Les Bonnes Femmes* to both *Le Notti di Cabiria* and *Strangers on a Train*. But was the journey really necessary, since Wood has already reached his destination by other means?

Overall, though, this is an excellent book, indispensable to any Chabrol admirer, and so closely argued on a thematic basis that one can't really do justice to it in a brief review. As film piles up on film in the astonishing creative burst since *Les Biches*—and as it becomes increasingly possible to isolate Gégau's contribution—there is no question that, as this book argues, Chabrol has grown up to fit the Leavisite dictum of Robin Wood's opening sentence: 'For the artist who wishes to go on creating, as for the man who wishes to go on living, a constant need is to seek out that which he may honestly affirm.' Whether he can be pigeonholed quite so neatly as Robin Wood suggests—'The savage derider of the bourgeoisie has become its elegiac poet'—is very much open to question, however. Chabrol, happily, still seems to follow his instincts, and to judge by the savage (if understanding) derision which goes to make up the Michel Bouquet character in *La Rupture*, I imagine he still has a healthy laugh or two at Leavisite expense up his sleeve.

TOM MILNE

THE LONELY ARTIST: A Critical Introduction to the Films of Lester James Peries

By Philip Coorey

LAKE HOUSE INVESTMENTS LTD., PUBLISHERS, Ceylon

Thanks to the National Film Theatre, audiences in London at least have had the chance to see most of Lester James Peries' films, and this little book from Ceylon comes as a useful appendix to the recent season. Although Mr. Coorey, a leading Sinhalese critic, has for years been a friend and colleague of Peries, the association has not blunted his critical judgments. Here, he gives a frank account of what he believes to be the director's particular strengths and weaknesses, in the form of individual chapters on the seven films from *Rekava* (1956) to *Akkara Paha* (1969)—there is at least one other yet to be seen in Europe—plus a few comments on the early short films and some quotations from articles by Peries.

Fifteen years ago, Peries was in much the same situation as Ray a little earlier in Bengal. Excited and influenced by a mass of films seen in London and elsewhere, he returned to Ceylon to the creaking mediocrity of the existing Sinhalese cinema, with its reliance on exaggerated melodramas based on South Indian models. Peries and his cameraman and editor resigned from the Government Film Unit in 1955 and set off to make a truly indigenous film on location (*Rekava*) with little money and few facilities, which gained prestige abroad but proved a terrible financial failure at home. This resulted in several years of frustration and rethinking before he managed to make *Sandesaya* (1960), basically an action drama about a band of 16th century Sinhalese rebels fighting the Portuguese conquerors.

As Mr. Coorey points out, this film is not really typical of its director's preoccupations; at his best, Peries is an intimate, elegiac artist (many of his films deal with love affairs interrupted by social conventions, a brooding fate or a moral crisis), using the changing face of his rural and urban backgrounds as an intrinsic element in the narrative. Mr. Coorey pinpoints the thematic trends and stylistic devices, such as the sparing use of close-up, a generally measured tempo, the choice of certain actors, which comprise Peries' style, and gives a particularly lucid analysis of the character development in *Gampelaliya*, *Golu Hadawatha* and *Akkara Paha*. He also points out some structural weaknesses, like the second long flashback in *Golu*.

Both in Coorey's analyses and Peries' own comments, one is made aware of what it is like to be a pioneer in a small country with a film industry plagued by all kinds of technical deficiencies, hidebound censorship regulations and a stagnant filmic tradition. Ray at first in Bengal, Peries in Ceylon, now Shadi Abdelsalam in Egypt...

the list of lonely artists fighting their battles against bureaucracy and entrenched commercialism increases. Mr. Coorey, in describing how Peries has achieved at least a measure of recognition, puts his finger on the most encouraging factor: somehow they manage to keep going.

JOHN GILLET

THE GREAT MOVIE STARS: THE GOLDEN YEARS

By David Shipman

HAMLIN, £2.75

L'ENCYCLOPEDIE DU CINEMA PAR L'IMAGE: TOME II

By Roger Bouissnot

BORDAS, Paris

FILMS IN AMERICA 1929-1969

By Martin Quigley Jr. and Richard Gertner

GOLDEN PRESS, New York, \$12.95

LOST FILMS

By Gary Carey

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART/NEW YORK GRAPHIC SOCIETY, \$4.95

The worldwide boom in film interest and film books to cater for it continues to throw up any number of volumes of vaguely encyclopaedic intent, ranging in their coverage from limitless inclusiveness to the (notionally) exhaustive cataloguing of some small chosen area. The trouble with most of them, especially when by their looks we may suppose they aspire to the coffee table, is that they do not pay enough attention to the all-important planning stage, to deciding just what they mean to put in and what to leave out. Hence, they tend to be too arbitrary in their page-to-page rulings for anyone who may want to use them as handy works of reference not to derive at least as many frustrations as satisfactions from consulting them.

Of this particular batch, Mr. Shipman's assemblage of star biographies is by far the most useful. He has picked his field, which is English-speaking (mostly Hollywood) stars from the rise of the star system in silent days to the end of World War II. The ending is a little untidy, as he admits himself. It is a matter of subjective feeling whether someone who achieved top stardom around the war years belongs in the book or not, and many would disagree with a standard which includes John Wayne but excludes Rex Harrison and David Niven. In many ways it might have been better to regard the star system as something now entirely historical and to have covered its whole range through the Susan Hayward generation up to Burt Lancaster, Marilyn Monroe and James Dean.

At least, however, Mr. Shipman has made a clear choice (maybe he has a second volume up his sleeve), and within it he is reasonably complete and reliable. There are 181 potted biographies of stars, giving one a rough idea of the shape their careers took, mentioning and dating their major films (though there is no pretension to completeness here) and enlivening the recitals with occasional critical

comments. The book does give a faint impression of being physically bulked out; it is set in double columns, unjustified towards the right, which is hardly the most economical way of using the space available, and suggests that the book is aimed more at the casually browsing reader than the student.

Volume Two of Roger Bouissnot's hefty work complements Volume One, which contains the main body of the text, with a collection of more than 3,000 pictures briefly captioned. A third volume, with supplements, corrections and updates of the first two, is now on its way. It is difficult to see exactly how this second section would be useful—apart, presumably, from reminding readers what most of the actors written about in the first look like—and the pleasures it has to offer just as a picture-book are severely limited by poor colour reproduction and often rather blotchy black-and-white. Nor, with rare exceptions, are the stills selected with any particular enterprise. This is probably an extra that most people equipped with the first volume could safely do without.

The purpose of *Films in America 1929-1969* remains impenetrably obscure to me. It consists of a succession of flat and uninformative critiques (usually 100-200 words apiece) of films selected year by year, with no apparent rhyme or reason beyond the authors' idea of what constitutes a 'representative' selection (1953: *How to Marry a Millionaire*, *Shane*, *From Here to Eternity*, *Roman Holiday*, *The Robe*, *Wages of Fear*, *Bwana Devil*, *The Moon is Blue*), with the briefest of credit-summaries appended. Though the bias is heavily towards Hollywood, occasional European films do slip in. Who could want this book, for what, heaven alone knows.

In comparison, the Museum of Modern Art publication is a model of modesty and sanity. *Lost Films* is about precisely that: it considers 30 American films of the 1920s which, as far as anyone now knows, survive in no recorded collection, and maybe do not survive at all. For each there is a brief text summarising the plot and giving outline credits, plus a few odd relevant details of players and technicians involved. But the main point of the book lies in its wealth of stills, often mouth-wateringly beautiful and splendidly reproduced.

The purpose of the book is of course propagandist: to alert readers to the need for full investigation of the surviving resources of the silent cinema and their speedy and effective conservation. Is it conceivable that films such as Sjöström's *The Divine Woman* (with Garbo) and *The Tower of Lies*, Benjamin Christensen's *Lon Chaney vehicle Mockery*, Sternberg's *The Drag Net*, Lubitsch's *The Patriot*, or the original version of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* have vanished for ever? If not, this timely reminder should do a lot to winkle them out.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

SWEDEN 1 and SWEDEN 2

By Peter Cowie.

A. ZWEMMER, 90p each.

Peter Cowie's little book on the Swedish cinema, published in 1966, has now been expanded into a 2-volume second edition, the main change being the expansion of the 10-page filmography into a 224-page reference volume.

This volume, *Sweden 1*, is a valuable reference tool, particularly so to those who lack access to the books by Sven Winqvist from which much of the data has been taken (with acknowledgment). It includes directors, players and technicians with mostly complete filmographies, and also credits and plot summaries of over 70 films which are discussed in the second volume. The film titles in the filmographies are all given in English, but a detailed index contains both English and original Swedish titles in double entry so that reference can be made from either direction. Unfortunately, the titles of short films are excluded from the index and so do not appear anywhere in their Swedish original, which is particularly tiresome in the case of Sucksdorff and Gösta Werner.

The biographical entries refer only very briefly to theatrical work, which is understandable; but it would have been nice to hear of Naima Wifstrand's long and successful career in musical comedy in her youth (instead of merely 'at first singer'). Dates, too, tend to be lacking and without a companion filmography (e.g. Winqvist) it becomes quite a dance to make any useful sense out of many of the film lists. The entries on Mauritz Stiller should be approached with caution in the light of Gösta Werner's research in *Mauritz Stiller och hans filmer 1912-16*, which came out too late to be taken into account.

The second volume, *Sweden 2*, is the narrative part and reads well. It is basically the 1966 book with some fifty pages added to include recent talents and fill one or two older gaps. The most interesting of these latter is Georg af Klercker (1877-1951) who sounds fascinating and due for rediscovery by a wider audience than Peter Cowie alone, if only for Cowie's tantalising reference to the visible influence on af Klercker of Feuillade.

The author's aesthetic judgments are not always reliable (which means that I do not always agree with them) and in particular I think he undervalues Molander's *En Natt*, Bergman's *Lektion i Kärlek*, Werner's *To Kill a Child* and Sucksdorff's *A Divided World*. He ignores the latter's delightful *Strandhugg*, and also ends his survey of Sucksdorff with *My Home Is Copacabana* (1965) with no indication of his later adoption of Brazil as his spiritual home. More seriously, while giving full emphasis to the importance of Sjöström in the development of the Swedish cinema, he is clearly out of sympathy with his films and describes them as 'heavy and uninviting'. On the other hand, he has some

THE SLADE SCHOOL OF FINE ART
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

DIRECTOR OF FILM STUDIES

Thorold Dickinson is retiring from this post in September 1971. Applications are invited from suitably qualified persons wishing to be considered for this appointment. Further particulars are obtainable from the Secretary, Slade School of Fine Art, University College London, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT. (01-387 5811)

JOHN FORD

William K. Everson rediscovers the lost films of this great director that may soon be restored to wider circulation; Jeffrey Richards examines Ford's lost world, "a cinema of dreams and memories", in an absorbing analysis of the well-known films; Mark Haggard presents a revealing portrait of Ford the man, reporting on two personal appearances in California; plus a Ford bibliography; a survey of Ford films available on 16mm; and a rich selection of illustrations.

All in the Spring issue (No. 6) of

FOCUS ON FILM

plus reviews of *Little Big Man* and *Husbands* with career details for the leading artists; career article on Ken Hughes; and feature on the cinemas of Norwood. 68 pages. Price 30p (6/-) or \$1 from leading film bookshops everywhere or direct (35p or \$1 including postage) from **FOCUS ON FILM**, The Tantivy Press, 108 New Bond Street, London W1Y 0QX (Tel. 01-499 4733).

From America's Leading Specialist in Cinema—TV

Nocens Absolvitur cum Tanta Stultitia

From a (The?) Leading Specialist in Cinema and Television. New Catalog "Cinema 6" of books, magazines, posters, other memorabilia in many languages. In preparation. \$1

CTVD Magazine—Quarterly review in English of the serious foreign-language Cinema—TV Press. USA \$3, elsewhere \$4 yearly.

HAMPTON BOOKS

Rt. 1, BOX 76, NEWBERRY, S.C. 29108, U.S.A.

very perspicacious comments, as when he draws attention to Sjöberg's eroticism; and his comparison of *The Wind* with *Greed* brings to mind Rune Waldekranz's theory (expressed to me some years ago) that Sjöström in Hollywood was considerably influenced by Stroheim.

The largest section of *Sweden 2* 'is quite unashamedly devoted to Ingmar Bergman' (104 pages out of 251) and it nicely complements the recent study by Robin Wood. Whereas the latter drew attention to the link between particular players and the various stages of Bergman's film-making (a valid and important point), Peter Cowie ignores that side altogether and concentrates on Bergman's inner psychological development (equally valid and important), although he does mention Bergman's greater use of music dating from his marriage with Käbi Laretei. He is particularly good on the two trilogies (from *Through a Glass Darkly* onwards), less so on the comedies.

There is a useful select bibliography of 143 items which includes most of the expected works. There are, however, some notable omissions, such as Wennerholm's biography of Sandrew and Sjöman's diary of the making of *I Am Curious—Yellow*. And it does not include a single biography of an actor or actress (Naima Wifstrand herself wrote two autobiographies, not to mention the definitive biography published shortly before her death); nor, either in the bibliography or in Volume 1, is there any mention of the novel-writing proclivities of some Swedish actresses. This is not merely a niggling criticism, but illustrates the author's general insensitivity to the contribution of the players. I suspect that one reason for the high quality and particular characteristics of the Swedish cinema is the extremely high degree of literacy throughout the film industry from the time of Charles Magnusson onwards.

NEVILLE HUNNINGS

Letters

Zoom Lens

SIR,—Paul Joannides writes in 'The Aesthetics of the Zoom Lens' (SIGHT AND SOUND, Winter issue): 'The transformations of the visual world caused by zoom and telephoto lenses are very similar; the latter could be called a "frozen" zoom, and a stopped-out zoom is often used instead of a separate telephoto lens. They are, in essence, the mobile and static halves of the same process, and the aesthetic problems which arise from their use merge naturally into each other.'

The above 'transformations' of the visual world are very different from each other. The only similarity is that a zoom lens set at a focal length identical to any particular telelens makes the same picture as the telelens, just as it does when set to the focal length of a 'normal' or wide-angle lens. A telelens can therefore not be called a 'frozen' zoom as such, as this might just as well apply to a wide-angle lens. They are thus not 'the mobile and static halves of the same process'; and this fact has certain repercussions on his subsequent argument.

The zoom lens has its own characteristics shared by no other lens, as it is a lens of variable focal length, and any aesthetic problems peculiar to a zoom lens are solely related to this fact. Aesthetic problems of any specific focal length, from fish-eye to extreme telelenses, relate to zoom lenses

only in so far as these fall within its own zoom range.

Unfortunately, most of the characteristics listed in Paul Joannides' article as relating to the zoom lens are affected by its confusion with the telelens. A zoom does not alter perspective. A zoom in from a short to a long focal length has only one main effect—reducing the angle of vision. All the qualities in the final frame, except a reduction in depth of field (in sharp focus), are unaltered from the same portion of the opening frame. And this could be achieved by masking-off of the image. (This may explain the cautionary note about the stills. It is impossible to determine whether a still has been taken with a telelens, without knowing its relationship to the complete negative.)

More important, this shows that the zoom is a better parallel to what the eye 'does' when seeing 'the corpse in the cupboard'. The eye, or rather the brain, can do a fast zoom when it suddenly concentrates attention on one small detail. The eye does not alter the perspective, nor does a zoom. On the other hand, a track or a cut to a close-up does change the perspective; and this, if anything, is 'unnatural'.

Zooms are thus not 'arbitrary insertions' in the conventions of 'normal' cinema . . . and normal vision. I suspect that the 'consequences' came first, as Paul Joannides' observations in and reactions in the cinema, to certain qualities of the images on the screen. He then tried, rather unsuccessfully, to find the optical reasons for these.

When he mistakenly claims that the telelens eliminates perspective and thus 'planarises' the natural world to make the screen become 'a flat surface with flat patterns', I would suggest that the long distance close-up reveals a tendency to alienation. It makes it

possible for the film-maker and the audience to be at a distance, while at the same time seeing close-up detail—to see details without getting involved.

This view has the advantage of conforming with the optical facts—getting a close-up while retaining the perspective and feeling of the real distance between camera and subject. This also conforms with the tendency to non-involvement so typical of bourgeois art, which has a strong tendency towards the escapist problems of formalism advocated by Paul Joannides. 'The possibility of placing the aesthetic centre of a film in a formalised dimension will inevitably allow greater freedom in what a director may show'—freedom from social commitment, I would suggest.

Yours faithfully,

STEIN FALCHENBERG

Teamwork Films,
London, W.C.2.

Spite Marriage

SIR,—John Gillett's comments about *Spite Marriage* in the Winter 1970/71 SIGHT AND SOUND gain some relevance if one refers to Rudi Blesh's *Keaton* (Secker & Warburg, 1966), where one learns that Keaton had tried to convince Irving Thalberg to make *Spite Marriage* with sound. 'It needn't be one long yak-yak,' Keaton is reported to have said to Thalberg. 'There's nothing wrong with sound that a little silence won't cure... I visualise sound effects. When you fall down and go boom, you really go boom. But leave the wisecracks and the bad puns and the dirty jokes to the burlesque comedians... Let the man say, "Now you go and do this," and then we go about our silent business with sound all around us.'

Immediately relevant to this information is the fact that *Spite Marriage* is one of the 'noisiest' of all silent films in its various visual strategies for suggesting sound, a quality that is only enhanced by its showing in Paris without musical accompaniment. The rhythmical complexity of many Keaton films has often been obscured by the irrelevant counter-rhythms of added music, and to my mind the 'visual' noises of *Spite Marriage* create an imaginary soundtrack far more arresting than anything a Sunday pianist could provide.

Yours faithfully,

Paris 6e. JONATHAN ROSENBAUM

Film Bibliography

SIR,—I am preparing a *Bibliography of Film Books and Periodicals 1920-1970*, and would be grateful to hear from readers/publishers with knowledge of any items suitable for inclusion therein—and if anyone has a copy of *Sequence I* (I possess all the other issues) dare I ask for a loan of this rare (roneoed) treasure?

Yours faithfully,

ROBERT HATCH

Hendham House,
Woodleigh,
Kingsbridge,
S. Devon.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

LOUISE BROOKS, Pabst's legendary Lulu, star of *A Girl in Every Port*, *Beggars of Life*, *Diary of a Lost Girl*, *Prix de Beauté*. Now lives in Rochester, New York; and wrote her first film article, for SIGHT AND SOUND, in 1956... GRAHAM CADWALLADER is an advertising copywriter, currently writing a book on the history of television commercials... MARILYN GOLDIN is an American novelist and film critic (mainly for the magazine *Seventh Art*); she also appears in a small part in *The Conformist*... RONALD LEVACO is a fellow of the Centre for Soviet Studies at Southern Illinois University. Currently lecturer at San Francisco State College, and working on a book of Kuleshov translations... DAVID PIRIE is doing postgraduate research on Edgar Allan Poe; also working on a book on the aesthetics of the horror film... ABRAHAM POLONSKY, scriptwriter (*Body and Soul*), director (*Force of Evil*), noted victim of the Hollywood blacklist. Returned as writer of *Madigan*, director of *Tell Them Willie Boy Is Here*, and has just completed *Romance of a Horse Thief*... COLIN WESTERBECK, JR. is an instructor in English at Brooklyn College and the film critic for *Commonweal* magazine.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MGM-EMI for *Tales of Beatrice Potter*, *Get Carter*, *The Oblong Box*, *Scream and Scream Again*.
WARNER BROS. for *Performance*, *Death in Venice*.
WARNER/HAMMER for *Taste the Blood of Dracula*.
COLUMBIA PICTURES for *King Lear* (Brook), *Husbands*.
20TH CENTURY-FOX for *Monte Walsh*.
CINEMA CENTER/20TH CENTURY-FOX for *Little Big Man*, *Rio Lobo*, photograph of Howard Hawks.
PARAMOUNT PICTURES for *Hatari!*.
RKO-RADIO PICTURES for *Bringing Up Baby*.
ACADEMY/CONNOISSEUR for *Tristana*, *Death by Hanging*.
ALLIED ARTISTS/GENE GUTOWSKI for *Romance of a Horse Thief*.
UNIVERSAL PICTURES for *Taking Off*, *The Hired Hand*.
AMICUS/BRITISH LION for *I, Monster*.
CUPID/ACTION PLUS PRODUCTIONS/PETER SYKES for *Venom*.
CALIBAN/PLAYBOY for *Macbeth*.
JOSEPH SHAFTEL PRODUCTIONS for *The Trojan Women*.
SOVEXPORTFILM for *King Lear* (Kozintsev).
POLIFILM for *Wind from the East*.
RAI-RADIOTELEVISIONE ITALIANA for *The Spider's Strategy*.
MARS FILM/MARIANNE/MARAN for *The Conformist*.
CAHIERS DU CINEMA for *By the Law*.
LOUISE BROOKS for *An American Venus*, *It's the Old Army Game*.
SUSAN SONTAG/SANDREWS for *Brother Carl*.
RONALD LEVACO for photographs of Kuleshov.
STEPHEN WEEKS for *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.
NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE for *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks*, *The Great Consoler*, *International House*, *The Road to Glory*.

Violence on the Screen

ANDRÉ GLUCKSMANN

A systematic report on the different strands of research into the possible effects on young people of scenes involving violence in film and television. Indispensable reading for anyone concerned to come to grips with this area of much confusion and misinformation.

78 pages. 40p (47p inc postage)

Order from:

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE PUBLICATIONS

81 Dean Street, London W1V 6AA.

Sight and Sound

Binders for the new format, attractively finished in blue with gold lettering, are available at 90p including postage. Each binder holds two years supply.

The British Film Institute,
Publications Department,
81 Dean Street,
London W1V 6AA.

CORRESPONDENTS

HOLLYWOOD: Axel Madsen
ITALY: Giulio Cesare Castello
FRANCE: Gilles Jacob, Rui Nogueira
AUSTRALIA: Charles Higham
SCANDINAVIA: Ib Monty
SPAIN: Francisco Aranda
POLAND: Boleslaw Michalek
INDIA: Amita Malik

PRINTED BY The Whitefriars Press Ltd., London and Tonbridge, England.

BLOCKS by Art Reproduction Co. Ltd., London.

SOLE AGENTS for U.S.A.: Eastern News Distributors, 155 West 15th Street, New York 10011.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES (4 issues) £1.40 including postage. U.S.A.: \$5. Price per copy in United States, \$1.25. For information about reduced rates for two or three year subscriptions, write to the Publications Department, British Film Institute, 81 Dean Street, London, W1V 6AA.

PUBLICATION DATES: 1st January, 1st April, 1st July, and 1st October. Overseas Editions: 12th of these months.

Fred Lawrence Guiles **NORMA JEAN**

The story of the sex goddess
who was Marilyn Monroe
and the price she had to pay to be her.

Wherever paperbacks are sold 40p
Illustrated



Granada Publishing



SCREEN SERIES

JAPAN

Arne Svensson

The first real 'dictionary' of Japanese cinema to be published in the West, with career filmographies of all the major directors, players and technicians, together with full credits and plot synopses for all the most important individual films, and an index to all titles mentioned in the text. Approximately 200 pages, 120 stills, and 4 pages of colour plates.

April £1.05

CONCISE HISTORY OF THE CINEMA

ed. Peter Cowie

More than thirty critics from a dozen countries have written specially commissioned pieces for this comprehensive outline history of the international cinema. Their material has been assembled by Peter Cowie into a lucid, richly informative narrative text that covers every aspect of the cinema from directors to technological developments. Each volume 224-256 pages with over 100 stills, including six pages of colour plates in volume 2.

Volume 1: the period up to the second World War

June £1.25

Volume 2: From the second World War up to 1970

June £1.25

INTERNATIONAL FILM GUIDE SERIES

THE CINEMA OF CARL DREYER

Tom Milne

An enthusiastic, enlightening and finely illustrated monograph on one of the cinema's truly great directors. Written by Tom Milne, this important book covers and analyses the career and films of the director of such classics as *The Passion of Joan of Arc* and *Day of Wrath*. Over 200 pages and 80 stills.

April £0.75

Zwemmer's Bookshop 76-80 Charing Cross Road, London, WC2

FILMS IN THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE'S DISTRIBUTION LIBRARY



include

Features by Bergman, Antonioni, Welles, Ozu, Hitchcock, Ford, Mizoguchi, Wajda, Bunuel . . .

Shorts by Fischinger, McLaren, Jennings, Borowczyk, Franju, Anderson, Resnais, Bartlett . . .

. . . and specialist items from Granada Television, Yorkshire Television, Royal College of Art, Royal Anthropological Institute, N.Y. University Film Library, CBS Records, BFI Production Board, and many others.

Catalogue at 50p (post free) from BFI Publications Dept, 81 Dean St, W1V 6AA.

British Film Institute Summer School 1971

Eastbourne 31 July - 14 August

Brochure from :
Summer School Secretary (Ref SS/1)
Education Department
British Film Institute
81 Dean Street
London W1V 6AA

REALISM: THEORY & PRACTICE

FILM GUIDE

Films of special interest to *SIGHT AND SOUND* readers are denoted by one, two, three or four stars.

ASSAULT (Rank)

Old-fashioned whodunnit from *Carry On* producer Peter Rogers, about schoolgirls who will keep going down to the woods. What they find there is entirely unsurprising, and picking out the killer from the red herrings is the only diversion. (Suzy Kendall, Frank Finlay; director, Sidney Hayers.)

*BARTLEBY (British Lion)

Herman Melville's inspired story (about a ledger clerk who disrupts office life by preferring not to work) barely manages to sparkle through newcomer Anthony Friedmann's excessively literal-minded direction. Some compensation in John McNery's agonisingly convincing portrayal of Bartleby; and rather too much compensation in Paul Scofield's characterisation of his bewildered employer.

**BATTLE OF ALGIERS (Rank)

Pontecorvo's quasi-documentary reconstruction of the growth and suppression of the FLN in the Algerian Casbah. An exemplary model for aspiring propagandists which gains credibility and persuasiveness by presenting the paratrooper torturers as all too human pawns in a nasty colonialist game. (Jean Martin, Yacef Saadi.)

BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS (Fox)

Staggeringly outrageous concoction of sex, drugs and sundry vices on the Hollywood sin belt from the king of exploitation movies Russ Meyer. Just possibly a sick joke at the dream factory's expense; more likely an authentic piece of commercial pornography whose manic climax needs a very strong stomach. (Dolly Read, David Gurian.)

*BOY CALLED CHARLIE BROWN, A (Fox)

Schultz's celebrated *Peanuts* strip brought to life in an overlong but generally endearing animated feature. Despite exuberant musical numbers, a happy ending, and some cute explanatory monologues, the script periodically sparkles with some of the comic-strip's doourest observations. (Director, Bill Melendez.)

COUNTRY DANCE (MGM-EMI)

Heavy-footed Highland romp—based on James Kennaway—with Peter O'Toole as outrageous laird, swigging booze and offending the neighbours in an attempt to camouflage incestuous passion for married sister Susannah York. Shifts from farce to woman's weepie prove more exhausting than entertaining. (Director, J. Lee Thompson.)

DARKER THAN AMBER (Fox)

Private-eye melodrama in the Tony Rome tradition but lacking the stylish economy of the Gordon Douglas films. Rod Taylor tracks down the killers of Suzy Kendall, who appears, reconstituted, in a second role. Remarkable only for some exceptionally gory fisticuffs and several promising performances in support. (Director, Robert Clouse.)

**DEATH BY HANGING

(Academy/Connoisseur) Another cinematic shot in the arm from the staggering Nagisa Oshima, ostensibly about a Korean who survives hanging and is re-examined by his Japanese executioners. A devastating critique of capital punishment is merely the framework for Oshima's continuing analysis of national (and more than national) neuroses. (Yun-Do Yun, Fumio Watanabe.) *Reviewed.*

**DEATH IN VENICE

(Warner Bros.) Visconti's moody, reflective, surprisingly low-key adaptation of Mann's novella about an artist's fatal encounter with the physical embodiment of pure beauty. Elegant visual surface doesn't quite convey the necessary aura of interior decay. (Dirk Bogarde, Björn Andresen.) *Reviewed.*

**DEEP END (Connoisseur)

Skolimowski's unnerving and hilarious black comedy—shot in dazzling colour and set in a bizarre public baths where seedy and swinging London meet. (Jane Asher, John Moulder-Brown.)

**GET CARTER (MGM-EMI)

Michael Caine backed by splendidly sleazy Newcastle locations as an enigmatic thug who takes on gangland to avenge his brother's murder in blood. Slick, sleek, but atmospherically adrift in a flattish sort of no man's land between Raymond Chandler and *Performance*. (Ian Hendry, John Osborne; director, Mike Hodges.) *Reviewed.*

*GREAT WHITE HOPE, THE

(Fox) Sideways look at racial bigotry through the story of a turn-of-the-century black boxing world champion hounded out of the ring by a conspiracy of scared white Establishment lackeys. Martin Ritt packs a few good punches but overplays the drama; a full-blooded performance from James Earl Jones almost carries it. (Jane Alexander.)

**HUSBANDS (Columbia)

John Cassavetes, Ben Gazzara and Peter Falk as three middle-aged Americans desperately whooping it up in New York and London. An erratic successor to *Faces*, with moments of great perception and a real discovery in Jenny Runacre, a raw-faced six-footer. (Director, John Cassavetes.) *Reviewed.*

*JOAN (Fair Enterprises)

Made by a trio of young Americans, this *cinéma-vérité* portrait of Joan Baez and her Resistance leader husband David Harris builds through their personal love story to the image of a divided nation. Like the singing (of which we hear plenty), the film manages to be touching, suspiciously simple, and a shade repetitive.

**LANDLORD, THE

(United Artists) Abrasively scripted off-beat comedy about a pampered white boy trying ingenuously to relate to his newly acquired black tenants. Occasionally marred by the surfacing of its underlying seriousness, but with memorable performances from Beau Bridges as the well-meaning liberal and Lee Grant as his cannibalistic mother. (Director, Hal Ashby.)

**LITTLE BIG MAN (Fox)

Extraordinary adaptation of Thomas Berger's hilariously picaresque reconstruction of the old West seen through the eyes of a 121-year-old survivor of the Little Big Horn. Penn, in his richest film to date, adds several levels, making it tall

story, parody, elegy and document all at once; plus, sandwiched between the eternities of two close-ups of Jack Crabb's age-old face, a dream of what life *should* be. (Dustin Hoffman, Chief Dan George, Faye Dunaway.) *Reviewed.*

MRS. POLLIFAX—SPY

(United Artists) Rosalind Russell joins the CIA and finds it all rather humdrum until she wakes up on a Chinese plane to Albania. Initially engaging as a comedy spy, the lady soon gets rather tiresome as she begins to demonstrate the enterprise of the American matron abroad. (Darren McGavin; director, Leslie Martinson.)

**MONTE WALSH (Fox)

Another of the fashionably elegiac Westerns, with Lee Marvin as the white-maned cowboy confronting his own decline of the West. Thoughtfully and attractively shot, but in the long run inclined to wallow in the melancholy of its persistent nostalgia. (Jeanne Moreau, Jack Palance; director, William A. Fraker.) *Reviewed.*

*MURPHY'S WAR

(London Screen) Peter O'Toole as a wild Irishman, stranded on the Orinoco in the last days of World War Two, who goes bull-headed after the U-boat that sank his ship. Peter Yates gets in some good, *Bullitt*-style work with a characterful seaplane; otherwise, it's schoolboy adventure somewhat slowed by its more grown-up pretensions. (Sian Phillips, Philippe Noiret.)

MUSIC LOVERS, THE

(United Artists) Tchaikovsky slaughtered by Ken Russell, with the music perpetually defeated by hysteria and vulgarity. Glenda Jackson strips off in a train, and Richard Chamberlain dreams in slow motion as he plays the First Concerto. *Reviewed.*

MYRA BRECKINRIDGE

(Fox) Gore Vidal's splendidly scurrilous novel undergoes a disastrous transplant, in which Raquel Welch unexpectedly and implausibly toils to degrade American virility. Sad and inelegant glimpses of the old Hollywood that was Vidal's inspiration but to which Michael Sarne has seemingly remained immune; Mae West and John Huston enjoy themselves hugely in the twilight, but the monstrosity of this emasculation is unredeemable. (Rex Reed, John Carradine.)

**OWL AND THE PUSSYCAT, THE

(Columbia) Slick but mercifully unfussy direction by Herbert Ross of Bill Manhoff's abrasive Broadway comedy, with Barbra Streisand in best volatile Brooklyn form as the tart with the heart, making passes at the intellectual pseud with glasses (George Segal). Splendid timing and impeccable New York-bitchy dialogue.

**PERFORMANCE (Warner Bros.)

Immensely striking first film by Donald Cammell and Nicolas Roeg, with James Fox as a London gangster who takes refuge in the extravagant Notting Hill menage of a retired pop singer. Stunning, fragmented visual surface, and looming Borgesian intimations, opening some real doors of perception along with *trompe l'oeil* portentousness. (Mick Jagger, Anita Pallenberg.) *Reviewed.*

RAGING MOON, THE

(MGM-EMI) Blighted love affair between two independently-minded inmates of a home for the handicapped. Good performances

from Malcolm McDowell and Nanette Newman mostly by-pass the sentimental pitfalls, but their cardboard castle disintegrates as Bryan Forbes nudgingly overworks the incidental detail and overstates the understatement.

*REVOLUTIONARY, THE

(United Artists) The progress of one 'A' from student radical, through involvement with a workers' group, to half-fledged anarchist poised with a bomb in his lap. Interesting try at cool filming of issues usually seen hot; but almost fatally flawed by moment-to-moment imprecision in timing and reaction. Jon Voight brilliant as the young man in a quandary. (Jennifer Salt, Seymour Cassel; director, Paul Williams.) *Reviewed.*

*SOLDIER BLUE

(Avco Embassy) Sincere but somewhat basic indictment of racism by way of the notorious Indian massacre at Sand Creek, Colorado in 1864. Savageries lavishly copied from *The Wild Bunch*, but rather nullified by moony, soft-focus love scenes in the Great Hollywood Tradition. (Candice Bergen, Peter Strauss, Donald Pleasence; director, Ralph Nelson.)

SONG OF NORWAY

(Cinerama) Lumbering musical biography of Grieg, part Cinerama travelogue, part desperate rehearsal of stock Hollywood routines for the lives of the great composers. Synthetic effervescence against a background of postcard prettiness. (Torvald Maurstad, Christina Schollin; director, Andrew L. Stone.)

**TALES OF BEATRIX POTTER

(MGM-EMI) Dancers of the Royal Ballet, marvellously disguised as mice, frogs and squirrels, bring to life the nursery characters in a film ballet which really works in cinema terms. The curiously matter-of-fact fantasy of the Potter world is lovingly evoked by Ashton's choreography and some delicate colour. (Director, Reginald Mills.)

TAR BABIES

(New Cinema Presentations) Much fantastically version of Arrabal's Absurdist play *Fando and Lis*, directed by Chilean avant-gardist Alejandro Jodorowsky with all too many an appreciative nod in the direction of early Buñuel and late Fellini. (Sergio Klainer, Diana Mariscal.)

TELL ME THAT YOU LOVE ME, JUNIE MOON

(Paramount) Acid-scarred Liza Minnelli sets up house with crippled queer (Robert Morse) and epileptic (Ken Howard) to take on the world. Another stage in the decline and fall from critical grace of Otto Preminger.

10 RILLINGTON PLACE

(Columbia) Reconstruction of the Christie murders and the trial and execution of both the murderer and his innocent dupe. Richard Fleischer's evident fascination with schizophrenic murderers is reflected in the style, which fluctuates between documentary fact and director's fantasy—all confectioned tension and bludgeoning melodramatic tics. (Richard Attenborough, John Hurt.)

*WANDERER, THE

(Fair Enterprises) Beautifully muted and nostalgic in its framing narrative but lapsing into psychedelic baroque for the sequences in the lost domain, Albiococco's adaptation of *Le Grand Meaulnes* owes more to Timothy Leary than to Alain-Fournier. (Brigitte Fossey, Jean Blaise.)



BUSTER KEATON FILM FESTIVAL

BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH LEOPOLD FRIEDMAN, TRUSTEE & RAYMOND ROMAUER

Tyneside Film Theatre
Pilgrim St Newcastle 21506

April 12 for 3 weeks

Performances

2.30 6.00 8.30

Sundays

4.00 6.00 8.30



A TRIBUTE TO MARY PICKFORD

in conjunction with the
Mary Pickford Corporation

Brighton Film Theatre
North St Brighton 29563

May 6~15

Performances

2.30 6.00 8.30

THE ACADEMY CINEMA ONE

presents



JANE ASHER

JOHN MOULDER-BROWN · DIANA DORS

in

DEEP END_(X)

Directed by JERZY SKOLIMOWSKI